OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

RETRO GAMER

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA | NINTENDO | ATA… | …N-OP | MOBILE

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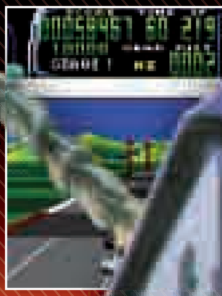
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RETROGAMER.NET

CONVERSION CAPERS

CHASE H.Q.

THE CLASSIC ARCADE RACER THAT BECAME A SPECTRUM HIT



AMAZING!

GAME & WATCH

HOW NINTENDO'S FUTURE WAS SHAPED BY ITS MOST ENDURING HANDHELD



ANT ATTACK!

PRESENTED IN GLORIOUS RETR-O-VISION

From the depths of **Quicksilva** comes an…

UNSTOPPABLE MONSTER!

starring

DAVID PERRY
The Earthworm Jim creator shares his 8-bit past with us

NIGHT SHIFT
We pull an all-nighter to bring you the making of Lucasfilms' satirical puzzler

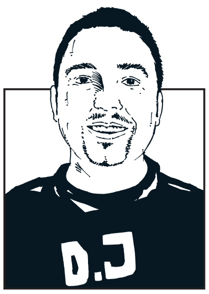
SOUL CALIBUR
Discover why the classic fighter was fine-tuned for the Dreamcast

S.T.U.N. RUNNER
RG takes Atari's stunning arcade racer for a spin

PLANESCAPE: TORMENT
Delve deep inside Black Isle's RPG masterpiece

THE RETROBATES

FAVOURITE SOUL CALIBUR CHARACTER



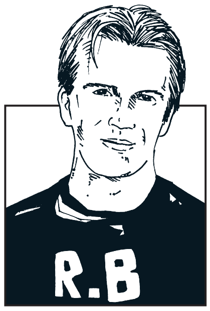
DARRAN JONES

Seung Mina. Primarily because she has a fantastic reach, is quick to recover and has easy to pull off combos. She's rather easy on the eyes as well…

Expertise: Juggling a wife, magazine and two kids

Currently playing:
The Bourne Conspiracy

Favourite game of all time:
Robotron: 2084



RICHARD BURTON

Ivy and I'll give you two reasons… The actual character takes a bit of skill to play, so no random button pressing for a jammy victory. Second, she's a corker with enormous breasts.

Expertise:
Stuff and nonsense

Currently playing:
Sir Lancelot

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



STUART HUNT

My favourite character in the series has to be Spawn, who wasn't ridiculously miscast in the slightest. Actually in all honesty it's probably Siegfried, simply for his tragic backstory and girly victory taunts, which always raise a wry smile.

Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them

Currently playing:
GTA IV

Favourite game of all time:
GTA IV



CRAIG GRANNELL

Having not played *Soul Calibur* since my Dreamcast was ousted from under the TV, my addled brain is saying Nightmare, due to me being rubbish and his sword making it slightly easier to hit things.

Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control

Currently playing:
New International Track & Field

Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



PAUL DRURY

Voldo. The love child of Kylie Minogue and Freddy Krueger. Man, that snake-hipped mentalist can really dance.

Expertise: Getting old programmers to confess their drug habits

Currently playing:
Super Pipeline 2

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



DAVID CROOKES

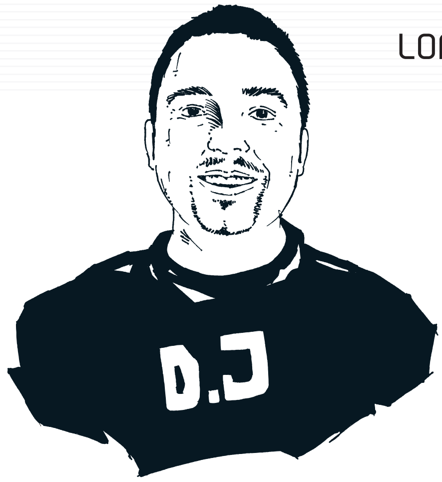
It's got to be Nightmare. With cool looks and insane strength, you can do some major damage if you employ this character properly.

Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation

Currently playing:
No More Heroes

Favourite game of all time:
Broken Sword

LOADING...



Apparently there are only seven different plots that all of the world's various stories are based upon. It's an interesting fact and one that could arguably be applied to the games industry as well. Take *Ico* for instance. It's a truly mesmerising game that features a young boy who's searching a beautifully abstract castle with a girl in tow. Throughout their escape he initially uses a basic weapon – a stick – to overcome the many shadowy foes that attack them. It's a truly fantastic game, but not as original as reviewers at the time of its release first claimed.

Now, imagine if the castle was replaced with an abstract city, the wooden stick with a grenade and the shadowy monsters with ants and you essentially have an updated version of Sandy White's wonderful *Ant Attack*.

Now we're certainly not suggesting that Team Ico intentionally ripped off White's cult hit – hell, it's possible that even to this day none of the game's developers are even aware of it – but it's interesting how these two games, nearly two decades apart, share so many similarities with each other.

I'm sure that many other examples exist, but seeing as they don't adorn our current front cover I won't bother to mention them.

Enjoy the magazine







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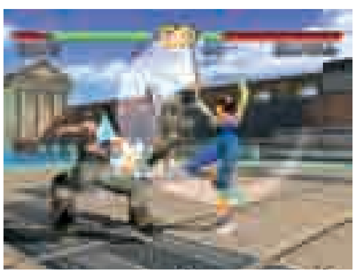
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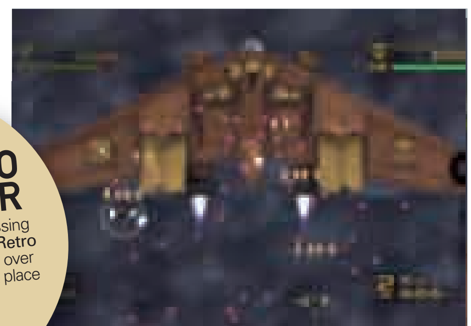


RETRO RATED

THE GAMES LISTING…

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake, then Retro Rated is where you'll find it

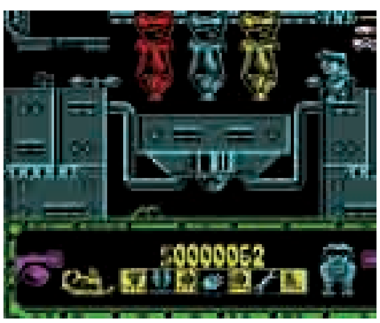




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THE MAKING OF…

NIGHT SHIFT

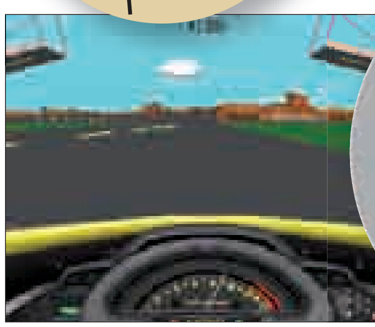
60 Mike Bevan goes behind the scenes of the biggest toy factory to ever feature in a computer game.



CONVERSION CAPERS

CHASE H.Q.

66 Ex-Ocean staffer, Bill Harbison reveals the difficulties of cramming Taito's coin-op into the Speccy and Amstrad.



THE MAKING OF…

4D SPORTS DRIVIN'

82 Atari's *Hard Drivin'* may have been the best, but *4D Sports Racing* remains a great addition to the genre.

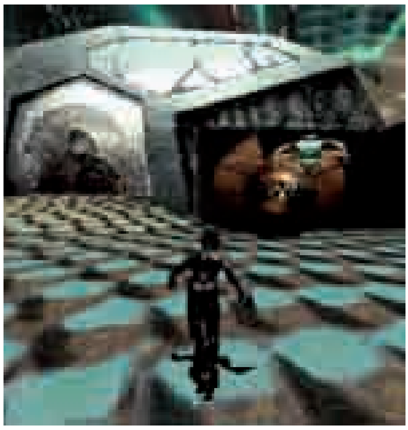


Okay, so it's not exactly retro, but it's great to see that Codemasters is in. Could we also see old DOS *Dizzy* games making a return?



Fallout 2 is a classic by anyone's standard. The fact that it can be picked up for less than a pack of fags is nothing less than brilliant.





IN GOG WE TRUST

AND ON THE SEVENTH DAY HE CREATED AN ALMIGHTY DOWNLOAD SERVICE



The PC is one of gaming's most diverse machines and has helped to release an astonishing amount of classic games over the years, ranging from *Doom* to the *Baldur's Gate* franchise. The recently launched Good Old Games website obviously thinks so to, as it's trying to group together as many classic titles as possible on its new download service. We spoke to Tom Ohle of CD Projekt, the company running the site, about what could be an essential download service for classic games.

■ Retro Gamer: Where did the idea for Good Old Games come from?

Tom Ohle: Right around GDC 2007 some of the guys from CD Projekt were talking about what makes up a good game, and they realised that lots of the characteristics they found appealing were commonplace in the good, old games that they used to play. After realising these titles were hard to find and weren't optimised for Windows XP or Windows Vista, they hit upon the idea of Good Old Games, or GOG.com for short.

■ RG: Why did you decide to go down the PC games route rather than that of console titles?

TO: I think that the audiences that played the games we're talking about – PC games throughout the late-Eighties, Nineties and early-Noughties – are generally a different bunch than those who would be interested in playing Sega Mega Drive games on their PCs. It's also just easier for us to do PC games: with console titles we would have to worry about emulation and other issues inherent to the fact that it's not the native medium.

■ RG: Why did you choose Interplay for your first deal?

TO: We didn't choose Interplay, it just happened that way. Interplay has created some of the greatest PC games of all time, and we



were very happy to sign a deal with them. Their back catalogue is very impressive, with games such as *Fallout*, *MDK* and *FreeSpace 2*, just to a name a few – all games that players remember fondly, but which are generally very difficult to buy nowadays. We're talking with many other publishers right now and more will follow Interplay shortly.

RG: What can subscribers expect from the Good Old Games service?

TO: We've got an easy-to-use website with superb games at low prices, and each game has a specially prepared product page. Once you buy the game, it's yours forever as the games are Digital Rights Management-free. After purchase, there's a hassle-free download – you get to choose how you download your purchases, either via http link or with our simple but cool download manager. Then you get a slick and very simple installer, and you'll be off playing classic games that have been optimised to run on Windows XP and Windows Vista. On top of all that, gamers will find some great additional material with every game, like game guides, walkthroughs and more. Everything has been thought of with the gamer in mind.

RG: How many publishers do you hope to join the service?

TO: In short: as many as possible. We want Good Old Games to be the definitive place to buy classic PC games. For now we're starting with a relatively small group, but we're keen to show every publisher that they absolutely need to put their best back-catalogue titles on the site.

RG: How much will the games cost to download from GOG.com?

TO: Either $5.99 and $9.99 including taxes. It's possible that we'll explore other price points in the future, but that's what we're starting with. We think those prices are extremely reasonable.

RG: You've mentioned downloaded games won't have copy protection, are you not worried about piracy?

TO: Sure, piracy is a concern. While talking with the publishers, the most common reaction to our Digital Rights Management-free idea was, 'you want to do what?' We have a few reasons, however, to be confident in our approach:

1) Gamers are sick of intrusive copy protection. Paying customers don't want to be treated like criminals and just want to play the damn game. Generally, all games get pirated; we're just trying to make it easy for people who have legitimately purchased the game to play it.

2) The price is right. You're looking at less than the price of a decent lunch for countless hours of gameplay.

3) We're good people and we think that the gamers that are likely to want to play these games are, too; they'll tend to be fairly mature players who know that piracy isn't going to benefit anyone in the long run. People often pirate games for a number of reasons, namely because they want to try them out before buying or they want to see if they'll run on their PCs; neither of those is a problem here, as you're not too likely to want to buy one of these games if you haven't already played it, and if you don't have a PC that will run them then… well, you're due for an upgrade.

FORUM OPINION

VISIT WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM/

ID: TMR

Someone pointed out the GOG.com site a little while ago and I had a peek; I'd say it has quite a bit of potential considering the £5 upper price tag and being able to protect that investment by dumping the downloaded games to CD. For me personally, it'll depend heavily on the games themselves but that's because I wasn't massively into mainstream games even ten years ago. If something like *Tubular Worlds* or *Raptor* turns up and is fully compatible with Windows 2000 or XP, they'll certainly be getting my fivers.

ID: Sherringford Hovis

Mmm. I quite like the idea, if what they say about compatibility and support is true. The only issue I can see is the games themselves. A lot of the old classics would probably be difficult to sell again since ownership of the IP is tricky to track down, especially when the developer has ceased to exist. Still, I guess they have looked into this, they seem confident enough. If they give me a good selection of games and update it regularly, I think they could be onto a winner.

ID: SirClive

Sounds great and I have already pre-registered. Being able to play old games without having to go down the DOSBox or speed limiter route sounds fantastic and the pricing structure is far more appealing than the Wii's Virtual Console.

ID: Just registered

This sounds good.

ID: I've signed up too!

Can't wait to see what games they are offering. Sounds like it's going to be good.

RG: Will you be able to download brand new titles, or will they mostly be retro related?

TO: Our focus is on classic PC games – that doesn't mean that every title will be from the Eighties or Nineties; we already have several games lined up that were released as recently as 2006. On forums everywhere, I keep seeing people posting "I wish I could play this game again" or "I tried to install this game on a new system and it wouldn't work." We've really built up a long list of games that people want to play again.

RG: Will there be the option of buying old compilations of games at a cheaper price like Steam?

TO: Our prices are low to start with, but I'm sure that we'll leave the door open for promotions, bundles and whatever else the marketing guys can dream up.

RG: What other services will Good Old Games be offering?

TO: We're really looking to make Good Old Games more than just an online store – we're calling it the 'GOG.com experience,' which is ultimately just a fancy way of saying we'll have the store and an extensive community dedicated to the games we're selling. We're approaching some of the best freelance writers in the business to put together retrospective articles on some of our top games, we've got a massive forum system that lets you comment on and discuss every title we sell, you can rate and review games, download game guides, wallpapers and other unique, additional materials… the list goes on.

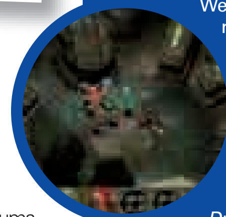
RG: What can Good Old Games offer that other similar services can't?

TO: For a start, we've got Digital Rights Management-free games, so when you buy the game you own it, rather than being dependent on a service. We're gamers ourselves and we don't like being restricted or to have some draconian copy-protection schemes put in place, so we've done away with that and we believe that gamers will be happy with our service; it will give them more time to be excited about the games rather than be absorbed with the copy-protection scheme. Finally, we're also investing a lot of time and effort into making GOG.com the definitive community dedicated to classic PC games.

GAMES WE'D LIKE TO SEE

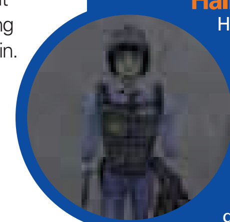
There are so many brilliant PC games we'd love to see on GOG.com. Publisher commitment willing, here's a few titles we'd definitely download if we had the opportunity…

Planescape: Torment



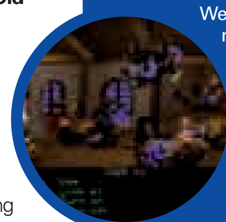
We've given it the full respect it deserves on page 32, but here's another nod for BioWare's excellent RPG. Stunningly atmospheric and easily the greatest computer game to ever bear the *Dungeons & Dragons* name.

Half-Life



Highly unlikely to happen, due to its availability on Steam, but hey, this is a wish list. Valve's superb shooter set a mould that was only recently eclipsed by its own sequel. A cracking game that every PC gamer should experience.

Secret Of Monkey Island



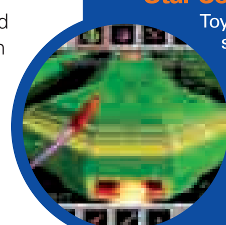
We've lost count of the number of times we've played through LucasArts' superb point-and-click adventure, but that doesn't mean we wouldn't jump at the chance to do so again. One of the funniest games ever.

Dungeon Keeper



Bullfrog made some brilliant titles back in the day, but this late effort from 1997 is easily one of the company's best games. The sequel is wonderful as well, but there's just something really special about the original. We'd love to find it on GOG.com.

Star Control franchise



Toys for Bob's excellent space-combat series would be perfect for GOG, as it enjoys a massively loyal fan base. Extensively covered in issues 14 and 15 (along with a free copy of *The Ur-Quan Masters*) it's well worth revisiting.

LAST-MINUTE NEWS



Donkey Kong and Jenga join forces

DONKEY KONG GETS WOOD

US board game manufacturer USAopoly has done a real number on the block-removing tabletop game Jenga. Due for release around September time, Donkey Kong Jenga is not just a lazy repackaged game of Jenga with an iconic face splashed over the box, but a repackaged game of Jenga combined with a new way to play the game. Apparently, as well as usual Jenga block-moving shenanigans, you can play the game by moving Jumpman up girders, using a 'mario marker' and a spinner, to save Lady from the peeved ape.





SEGA TAKES AGES

FINALLY, SHMUP FANS CAN LOOK FORWARD TO A COMPLETE FANTASY ZONE

If you're a shmup fan then there's never been a better time to pick up a Japanese PlayStation 2 (or a regular one with an import disc).

With the unprecedented news last issue that Sega's finally releasing *Thunder Force VI* on Sony's ghost-hording machine, this month it's also announced that it'll be dusting of Opa-Opa and foes for *Sega Ages 2500: Fantasy Zone Complete Collection*, which comes with pretty much all of the egg-shaped mite's adventures. Here's the rundown: *Fantasy Zone, Fantasy Zone II: The Tears Of Opa-Opa, Fantasy Zone Gear, Super Fantasy Zone, Fantasy Zone: The Maze* and *Galactic Protector* – quite a comprehensive collection indeed. And the good news doesn't end there as DC blaster *Trigger Heart Exelica* is now getting released in an 'enhanced form' on the console as well and is being handled by Japanese developer Alchemist.

If all that doesn't whet your blaster glands, an Australian classification website recently leaked the Xbox Live release of *R-Type Dimensions* – which is now set to be the latest 'final' instalment of the franchise since… well, *R-Type Final* and the surprisingly compulsive PSP space strategy game *R-Type Tactics*. The post reported that Tozai Inc – who is currently working on the Xbox Live game *Lode Runner* – will be doing the developing duties, and not *R-Type*'s creator Irem. But we're hearing good things of Tozai, so we're still looking forward to paying our points for it when it eventually touches down on the console.

HERO OF THE MONTH



OPA-OPA

HERO OF THE MONTH
Every month, **Retro Gamer** looks back at a classic videogame hero or heroine. This month it's the turn of Opa-Opa

First appearance: *Zillion*

Weapon of choice: Bullets (and occasionally bombs)

Most Likely to: Blast the chipper out of colourful looking, and insatiably cute, enemies.

Least likely to: Get a *Fantasy Zone* collection from Sega (no, wait)

Unusual fact: Opa-Opa was Sega's original mascot, before it became Alex Kidd, who was later dropped for Sonic.

LINK GETS A BOOK DEAL

QUITE PROBABLY THE MOST PORTENTOUS BOOK SINCE EAT, SHOOTS AND LEAVES

Here at RG we love to read. Darran likes to read Atari Lynx eBay listings, Steve likes reading football results on Sky Sports News and Stuart reads *Horrid Henry Joke Books*, so we're all well equipped to take on the big words that will be printed inside the literate-sounding *The Legend Of Zelda And Philosophy*.

Apparently it's a *Zelda* answer book that "puts videogames on the philosophical map as a serious area of study". It all sounds a little haughty to us. However, had you read our Complete History Of Zelda in issue 51, and hated it because it didn't contain self-important sentences like "Ocarina is an emotional melody of sweeping grandeur that eclipses the gamer and forces them to re-evaluate their relationship with their inner rabbit", then maybe this book could be for you. Although admittedly, we've not read a single word of it, so for all we know it could be a fancy-sounding pop-up book.



The book for very intelligent *Zelda* fans.

RETRO GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO…

EVENT HOSTING RETRO GAMER

IF YOU WANT **RETRO GAMER** TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because **Retro Gamer** looks to the past doesn't mean there aren't plenty of games and events to look forward to. Every month we list all the exciting games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list



SEPTEMBER

GAUNTLET

Released: September

Publisher: Eidos

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

From the moment we switched on the DS and listened to the rejigged theme tune, *Gauntlet* had us well and truly under its spell. Using a nifty scaling technique that enables you to quickly pinpoint generators, the ability to play online, not to mention over 40 huge levels to hack and slash through, this latest addition to the very old franchise already has our interest.



SEPTEMBER

SAMBA DE AMIGO

Released: 19 September

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99

Format: Wii

Sadly, we didn't get a chance to play *Samba De Amigo* the last time it was demoed, as we were… well… we can't remember where we were, but it definitely wasn't in the office. Fortunately, Ashley Day was able to play it and he's put any fears we had to rest. The ability to use two remotes sounds like a great boon and with any luck Sega won't skimp on the extra tracks either.



SEPTEMBER

SONIC CHRONICLES: THE DARK BROTHERHOOD

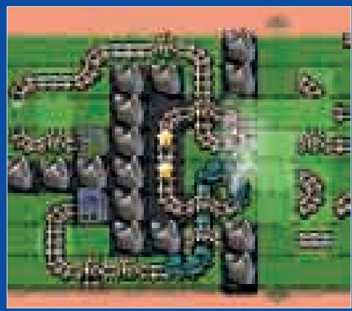
Released: 26 September

Publisher: Sega

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Apart from its silly name, we can't see how *The Dark Brotherhood* can possibly fail. It features the most popular hedgehog in the world, some gorgeous cel-styled visuals and it's being created by RPG master BioWare. If this isn't an essential release when it's available later in the year we'll turn **Retro Gamer** into a knitting magazine.



SEPTEMBER

PIPEMANIA

Released: 26 September

Publisher: Empire

Price: £34.99

Format: Wii

This has pretty much come out of nowhere, but after playing this great update of the classic puzzler for far too many hours it's instantly jumped to the top of our 'must-have' list. While we were very impressed with the new features, game modes and how well *Pipemania* works on the PC and PSP, it's the DS version that benefits the most. This is going to be very special…



SEPTEMBER

FINAL FANTASY IV

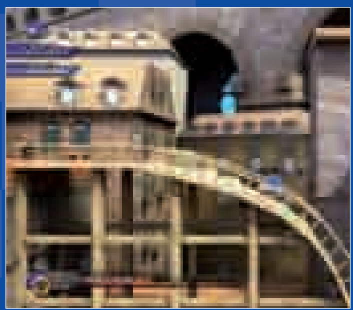
Released: 26 September

Publisher: Square Enix

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

After the phenomenal success of *Final Fantasy III* on the DS, it should come as no surprise to learn that Square is dusting off the next game in the classic, long-running franchise. Boasting truly stunning visuals and gorgeous new cut-scenes, *Final Fantasy IV* is looking like a great update for anyone who was a fan of the original SNES release. Now where's that proper *Final Fantasy VII* release? Eh, Square Enix…



NOVEMBER

SONIC UNLEASHED

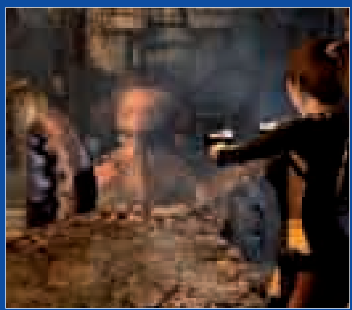
Released: 7 November

Publisher: Sega

Price: £34.99

Format: Wii, 360, PS3

While we've not had a chance to play it yet, regular contributor Ashley Day is very impressed. Playing like a cross between *Sonic R* and a traditional 2D *Sonic* game (albeit with a spiffy new 3D design) this is looking like a huge step up from the disappointing 360 and PS3 offering. We're hoping that the wonderful Stefan 'best PR ever' McGarry will be showing us a demo soon, so we can give you a better insight, hopefully next issue.



NOVEMBER

TOMB RAIDER: UNLEASHED

Released: 21 November

Publisher: Eidos

Price: £34.99

Format: Wii, DS, 360, PS3, PC, PSP

Every single games magazine has shown a screenshot of that bloody octopus from Lara's latest adventure, so we've done the same thing. We've not had a hands-on with it yet, but early reports suggest that it's very similar to the previous two outings (no bad thing in our book). Hopefully though, Lara has picked up a few tricks from Naughty Dog's Nathan Drake.



NOVEMBER

CASTLEVANIA: JUDGMENT

Released: 28 November

Publisher: Konami

Price: £34.99

Format: Wii

We would be lying if we were to say that we weren't a tad concerned with *Castlevania: Judgment*. Konami doesn't exactly have a stellar reputation for creating one-on-one fighters, and many will wonder why the developer didn't just opt for a *Metroid Prime*-style approach instead. Still, we're going to reserve judgement (ho ho) until we see the final product. Fingers crossed, eh?

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



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STAR LETTER

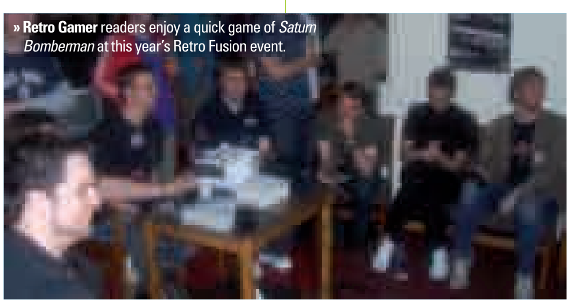
A FUSION OF FUN AND GAMES

Dear Retro Gamer,
I just wanted to write in and say that I loved the write-up on Retro Fusion '08. Frustratingly, I wasn't able to attend due to a family crisis at home, but it looks like I missed out on a fantastic event. I laughed out loud when I read your blog and saw that Darran had to share a room with one of his freelancers, and it's nice to be able to finally put faces to some of the forum members who are always cropping up on the letters pages.

Special kudos should go to Chris Wilkins though, as it's astonishing to think that this guy goes out of his way to create these events that so many people appear to enjoy, while giving all the actual profits to charity. Basically, when I read about events like this and how friendly and welcoming everybody was it makes me proud to be a retro gamer. I hope others feel the same way.

Robert Jenkins, via email

It's a shame you couldn't make it, Robert, as it really was a cracking event. We never cease to be amazed at how Chris can constantly churn these events out with a seemingly endless energy, and it's a real pleasure to attend them and speak to the people who help make **Retro Gamer** *the success that it is. Hopefully a T-shirt and Binder should make up for the great event you missed out on. Maybe we'll see you next year.*



» **Retro Gamer** readers enjoy a quick game of *Saturn Bomberman* at this year's Retro Fusion event.



HELPFUL READER #1

Dear Retro Gamer,
Please can you let Bob Howard (from issue 54) know that he can buy *Austerlitz: Napoleon's Greatest Victory* from www.gameswap.com.

Kindest Regards,

Vinny

Thanks, Vinny. We'd reward you for your kindness, but we've actually had quite a few helpful readers this month…



EVERY MONTH, ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy **Retro Gamer** T-shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a snazzy new **Retro Gamer** binder. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

GAROU: MARK OF A GREAT GAME

Hi Darran,
It's good to see *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves* getting a small mention in two of your more recent issues. I first discovered this excellent game about six months ago, and I love it! As a result it has now become my favourite ever 2D beat-'em-up. I have the MVS version and I regularly play it on my Neo-Geo AES via a converter. Please do a proper feature on it at some point, as it really deserves one.

While I'm here I feel I also have to beg you for a feature (and colour map) on one of my favourite ever BBC Micro games – *Citadel*. It was a brilliant arcade adventure for its time and was especially cool because as well as collecting the normal game objects, you could also win an additional £1,000 for finding the three hidden crowns.

Oh, and one last thing before I go, can you name the game that contains the following conversation? I have faith in you.

"Do you remember that day?"
"You mean the day of the incident?"
"Yes, that day…"
"The day the rain turned into snow?"
"Yes, that day…"
"Well no… I don't remember much…



» Thanks a lot, Vinny. It's not our cup of tea, but we're sure Bob is going to be very happy with your discovery.



» Darran and Stuart regularly use bouts of *Garou* to decide who'll be making the tea for the day. It's so much easier than a real fight.

Just that the rain turned into snow."
Thanks for the magazine – it's brilliant!

Richard Patrick, via email

Glad to hear you're enjoying Mark Of The Wolves *as much as we are, Richard. Darran was planning on picking up a consolised one-slot in order to play his favourite fighter, but the need for a new PC soon put a stop to that. Nice call on* Citadel *though. Games where you could win prizes were covered back in the Live Publishing days, but it would be nice to maybe revisit it from a new angle.*

Finally, we reckon that your conversation is from Shenmue.

HELPFUL READER #2

Dear Retro Gamer,
While reading the latest issue of your wonderful magazine I noticed that one of your readers had a problem getting *Beneath A Steel Sky* to work on Windows XP. While I posted the following on the forum, it'd be great if you could print it here, just in case the reader doesn't read the forums.

I managed to get it to work as follows: I used a program called IsoBuster, and browsed to my CD Drive and extracted the files from the CD to my hard drive.

After that you can install the game. It probably won't work in Windows XP, but it certainly worked in DOSBox.

I hope this helps.

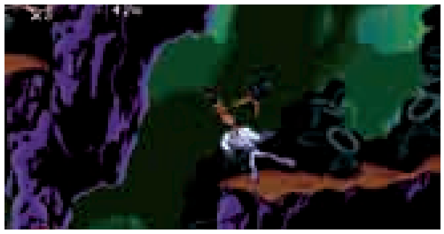
Anonymous, via email

HELPFUL READER #3

Dear Retro Gamer,
Adrian Pitt needs to check out www.scummvm.org for a solution to his *Beneath A Steel Sky* problem.

From the forum

EVERY MONTH, **RETRO GAMER** ASKS A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTS THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE WANTED TO KNOW...
YOUR FAVOURITE DAVID PERRY GAME?



ID: Antiriad 2097
MDK. 'Madly Delightful Killing' via 'More Deadly Kollectables' than the 'Merely Distracting Kompetition'. *Mortal Kombat* wasn't one of theirs, was it?

ID: FatTrucker
Hands down, *Earthworm Jim*. It was an amazingly original platformer on release with some of the most unique and alternative humour I've ever come across in a game. Still excellent fun and laugh-out-loud funny today, which is some achievement.

ID: neuromancer
Herbert's Dummy Run, as everyone else seems to be opting for *Earthworm Jim*...

ID: markopoloman
No! – you are all wrong! Amiga + *Supremacy* = Where did that month go?! *Supremacy* was fantastic. I might just boot up WinUAE for an evening of Perry love!

ID: Ian Smith
Well, *Herbert's Dummy Run* brings back a lot of good memories, but I think I would have to go for the excellent *MDK*.

ID: Sherringford Hovis
I spent many an evening playing into the wee hours on *Supremacy*, crushing my enemies with warriors clad in armour that looked just a teensy bit like the guys in *Dune*. Then I would spend many more hours inventing new family members to become seriously ill to explain my absence from work. Dave Perry, responsible for the death of 17 of my grandmothers. Hope he's happy.

ID: pforson
I'll go for *Sacrifice*. A brilliantly twisted strategy game that looked awesome with my brand new 3D card and was one of my first online gaming experiences. Great times.

ID: revgiblet
I'll be going for *Enter The Matrix*. What? I enjoyed it. No, I really did.

ID: sirclive1
Three Weeks In Paradise – great music (for a Speccy).

ID: Stranger81
I'm going to have to go with *Cool Spot*. Not only a great platformer but it also made me want to drink fizzy pop.

ID: Garry G
Earthworm Jim. I still smile when I launch that cow, a class game...

CONTACT US **Snail Mail:** Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset, BH2 6EZ **Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



» Thanks to the kindness of Joseph and many other readers, Adrian should finally be able to enjoy Revolution Software's excellent adventure.

ScummVM is a replacement executable for many classic point and click titles, including *Beneath A Steel Sky*, the LucasArts adventures, *Flight Of The Amazon Queen* and many others. It runs like a dream in Windows XP and also has ports to several other platforms such as Linux, Mac and even the DS and PSP!

ScummVM has given me many an hour of retro joy. Now I'm off to complete *Simon The Sorcerer* for the tenth time.

Joseph Fowler, via email

Thanks to Joseph, Anonymous and all the other kind souls who wrote in to help Adrian out with his problem. It's always nice to see the readers pulling together to help each other, so be sure to give yourselves all a pat on the back. You deserve it.

NEW-SCHOOL GRIPE

Hello Darran,

Until a few months ago **Retro Gamer** used to be my favourite videogame magazine. I've been collecting it since it was published by Imagine Publishing and felt it was awesome; mainly because there were plenty of articles about games and games companies that I loved. All was good and I couldn't wait for the new issue to hit WHSmiths. Then all of a sudden the magazine went downhill.

I grew up in the late-Eighties/early-Nineties gaming culture, got a NES and never looked back. Obviously you guys are a little older than me (I'm 25) and grew up with the Atari and VIC-20 consoles, but it feels like you've forgotten about the younger generation.

Many of your recent articles have been about old and what I personally think are boring games. I understand that these games were ground-breaking and that every game after has evolved from this period of gaming history, but it seems to be that you're no longer giving readers what they were once used to.

I haven't bought the magazine for nearly a year, as whenever I pick it up in the shop I just don't get the same buzz that I received when I first started reading. What I do find interesting I can read in the shop and I know that I'm not the only reader who has this opinion about your publication.

Thanks for your excellent magazine, as it has helped me a lot. Please do not see this email as a slagging-off, but more as constructive criticism, hopefully a return to form is on its way and I'll be waiting with high hopes.

Thanks for reading,

Damian Leighton, via email

It's funny you should mention this, Damian, as many people say the opposite and feel there is too much new stuff in the mag…

The biggest complaint we have is people writing in and expecting the magazine to contain stuff that's specifically directed at themselves. With over 30 years of gaming content to choose from and a large range of different genres and systems, it's inevitable that no one is ever going to be truly happy with every single page of content.

If you feel that the magazine is too expensive when only a few articles interest you, then why not take out a subscription? It works out at only a few pounds per month and helps ensure that the magazine will continue for years to come.

A SOLDIER'S TALE

Dear Retro Gamer,

I am 28, Greek and from Athens and I've been reading your wonderful mag from day one. I've actually been a gamer since 1985.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate you on your fine work. I have never missed a single issue, even during the period between 2005 and 2006 in which I joined the Greek Army as a sergeant in the Eastern islands of the Aegean. The other soldiers were also happy that they managed to find your magazine in the islands.

It is the most relaxing and enjoyable moment of every month, when I get every new issue. Your magazine is like a time machine that transfers us to the most nostalgic times of our youth or childhood. I still haven't reached a conclusion of whether it is the genuine gameplay that makes us still love these games of old, or just the lovely memories from our childhood. Maybe it's a mixture of both…

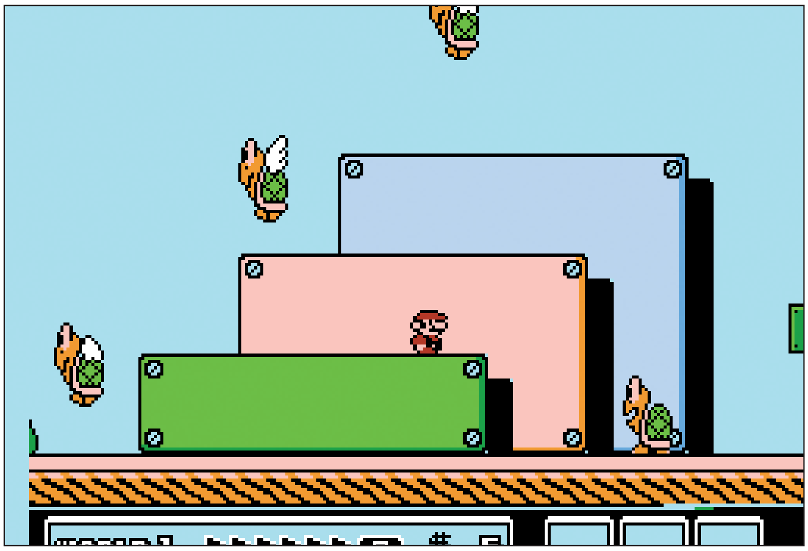
Keep up the good work guys!

Best Regards,

Gabriel Kairis, Greece

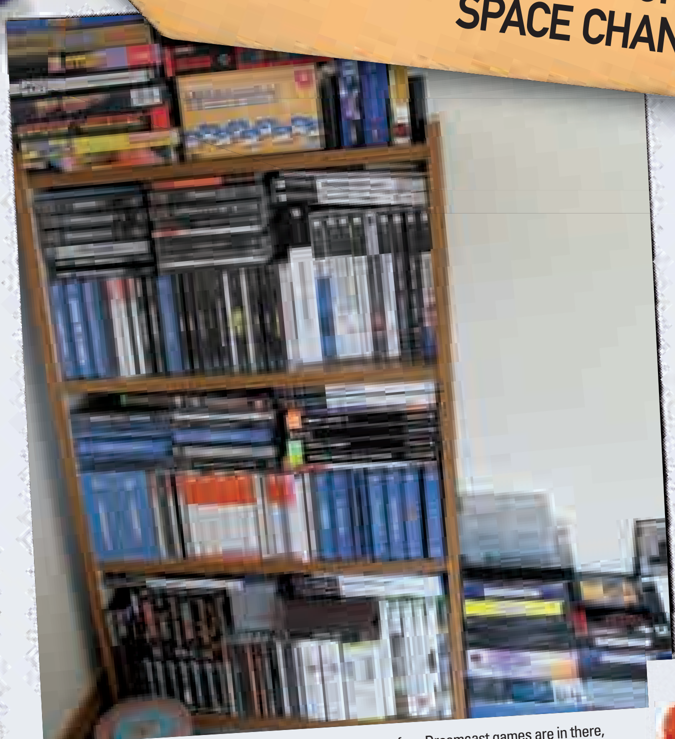
Glad you're enjoying the magazine, Gabriel. It makes all the hard work worthwhile.

» Unlike Matthew Lightbourne's recent letter, Damian wants less 8-bit computer coverage. So who's right? Answers on a postcard…



COLLECTOR'S CORNER

WHILE THIS MONTH'S COLLECTOR HAS QUITE A FEW SYSTEMS IN HIS COLLECTION, HE HAS A SPECIAL LOVE FOR SEGA'S DREAMCAST AND ITS SPACE CHANNEL 5 HEROINE ULALA



» A good cross section of my gaming habits – the majority of my Dreamcast games are in there, along with a lot of TurboGrafx and Sega Saturn titles. There's a Neo-Geo Pocket Color stashed at the side there, too.



» Hi there, I'm Chris Boyd. When I'm not collecting *Space Channel 5* trinkets I can be found working as a director of research and flitting backwards and forwards between the UK and US.

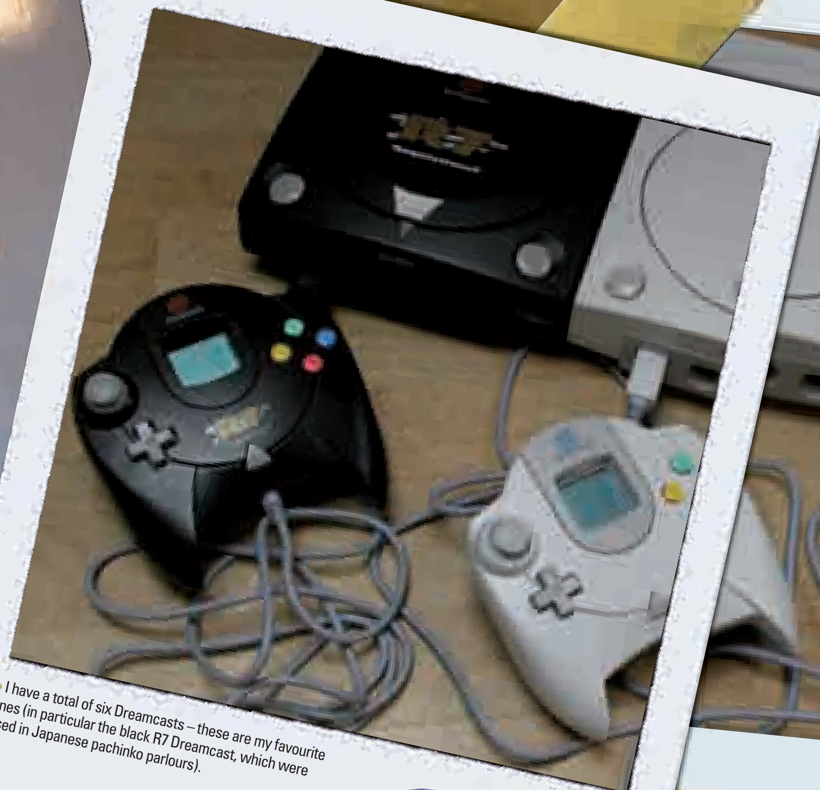




» Most of my consoles; all plugged in and ready to roll. I have a Jap, NTSC and PAL Dreamcast plugged in to avoid messing around with boot discs, a couple of PlayStations hidden in the corner and a rare PAL TurboGrafx under the TV screen. Sorting out all the wires was a nightmare, but was well worth the effort.



» This is a rare Tommy Boy 12" record for *Space Channel 5*. Tommy Boy released quite a few CDs and promo items for *Space Channel 5* but not many people know they actually exist – and when they do, it's almost impossible to get hold of them anyway. Note the 'mirrorball' style pattern on the sleeve.





» I have a total of six Dreamcasts – these are my favourite ones (in particular the black R7 Dreamcast, which were used in Japanese pachinko parlours).



» This is the *Space Channel 5 Part 2* collectors' box, which contains a set of Ulala headphones, a 'Galaxy bag' and of course a copy of the near mythical *Space Channel 5 Part 2* for Dreamcast. I don't like to think about how much time, effort and money was involved in tracking this down!





» My *Space Channel 5* collection, which includes soundtracks, pre-production discs, every copy of the Dreamcast game available, the collectors' edition boxset and a tiny Dreamcast Gashapon model (which comes with a *Space Channel 5* CD, obviously). It's not a complete set, but it's getting there…

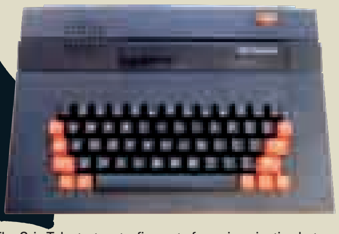
If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about then contact us at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

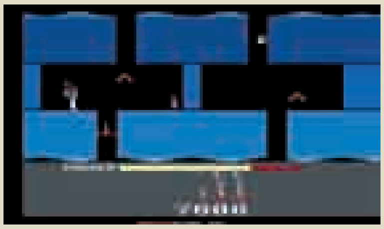
THE LATEST NEWS FROM NOVEMBER 1984



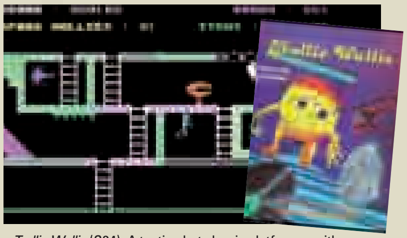
NOVEMBER 1984 – Coleco gone, Parker Brothers going, wheat-based games and game-based cereals, Imagine takes a Commercial Break, Activision and US Gold get busy and Microsphere revisits its Skool Daze. Richard Burton gets detention for farting in a pencil case…



» The Oric Telestrat: not a figment of your imagination but due to a very limited release, a rare and sought-after micro.



» *H.E.R.O.* (Atari 2600): Helicopter Emergency Rescue Operation – save the hostages and save the day. Simple but fantastic.



» *Trollie Wallie* (C64): A testing but classic platformer with some stunning music re-creations of *Equinox* and *Popcorn*.

Oric Products International finally had some good news after months of uncertainty. It had plans to release three new systems; two IBM compatibles and a home micro that would be a natural upgrade from the Oric Atmos, provisionally titled the Stratos. All machines were hoped to be available around early spring 1985.

Sadly, just three months later Oric had gone into receivership. What remained was bought by French company Eureka, who continued to develop the Stratos idea, which eventually became the Oric Telestrat.

Shenanigans were afoot when Atari and Coleco clearly had a misunderstanding regarding the future of Coleco in the UK. Atari announced that Coleco would be "withdrawing from the UK market place leaving Atari as the unchallenged leaders". Coleco, manufacturer of the Coleco Adam computer and ColecoVision console, was plainly perplexed by this press release and responded by denying that it had "any plans whatsoever to leave the market".

Did Atari have a mole at Coleco? Did Coleco have any clue what was actually going on? By the end of the month everything was clear. Coleco had indeed pulled out of the UK games market.

Further withdrawals followed with news that Parker Brothers, the US software house, would also be leaving the UK. Company sales had suffered when Atari embarked on a severe price reduction of its Atari 2600 software range with most titles reduced to £9.99. Parker Brothers games still cost £29.99. Naturally, sales plummeted.

It was also working on several projects, including *Star Wars* and *Popeye*, which were to be released on Spectrum ROM cartridge. Sadly, the format never took off and the planned games were scrapped.

CDS Microsystems revealed that it had finished its new snooker game and that world champion Steve Davis would endorse it. *Steve Davis Snooker* would play well and be released on a host of systems. The mildly filthy double entendres including sinking the pink, in off the brown and touching balls would soon follow…

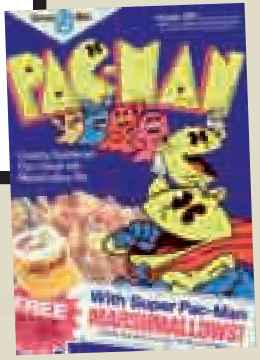
Domark, one company not shy of a bit of shameless self-promotion, was at it again with its new adventure title, *Eureka!*. Written by Ian Livingstone of the *Fighting Fantasy* books, it was based in five different eras with you attempting to find clues that point to a mystery phone number. Discover the number, be the first to ring it and you would pocket £25,000. Nice. *Eureka!* would cost £14.95 and would initially be available on Spectrum and C64.

Romik Software launched something of a licensing first, a cereal-based computer game. *Weetabix Versus The Titchies*, branded by Weetabix itself as something "unique", was in fact a *Space Invaders* variant. The only really unique difference being the main character was not a spaceship but a wheat biscuit with eyes sporting a natty pair of Doc Martins.

It would cost £3.75 for Spectrum and C64 owners with a £1 discount for members of the Weetabix Club (milk not included) which followed the adventures of Brain, Bixie, Dunk, Crunch and Brian. Thankfully a proposed Banana Bubbles RPG never materialised…

However, those hungry Americans had released a videogame-based cereal. Start your mornings with Pac-Man, a feast of corn and marshmallow, all coated in a delicious layer of preservatives, additives and sugar. Yummo.

Realtime Software's latest offering underwent a late name change prior to release. *3D Starstrike*, the game with a whiff of *Star Wars* about it, was originally going to



» In the morning why not stuff your face with marshmallow power pills for that E-number-fuelled day ahead.



» *Congo Bongo* (C64): Monkey-based isometric arcade game conversion with a hint of *Donkey Kong* about it.



» *Uncle Claude* (BBC): Escape from the mad Uncle Clive… erm… Claude… who keeps lobbing Spectrum computers at you.

CHARTS

1984

NOVEMBER NEWS

7 November saw Ronald Reagan re-elected as the US President for a second term after a landslide victory against his Democratic opponent, Walter Mondale. Reagan secured 525 Electoral College votes out of a possible 538.

On 12 November the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Nigel Lawson, revealed in his Autumn statement that the £1 note would be removed from circulation to be replaced by the £1 coin, which had been introduced earlier in the year. The smallest denomination, the half penny, would also cease to be legal tender.

On 26 November filming began on a new movie starring Eric Stolz as Marty McFly in *Back To The Future*. The original choice for the role, Michael J Fox, couldn't accept the part as he was contracted to the TV series *Family Ties* and his workload would not allow him to be released for filming.

Once filming began though it became apparent that Stolz wasn't suitable for the role and the filmmakers again courted Fox to see if he was available. A schedule was drawn up so that he could film both the movie and TV series. This resulted in a lot of night-time shooting and very little sleep for Mr Fox. It was all worth it though…



» The early draft of *Back To The Future* used a cheaper mode of time travel transportation than the Delorean…



» Four more years as US President for Ronald Reagan after overwhelming Walter Mondale.



» *Electron Invaders* (Electron): Does what it says on the cover, *Space Invaders* for the Electron. A nice slick version though.

be called *Starburst*. Thankfully, it was changed at the 12th hour for the more favourable title.

Microsphere announced the release of its newest game, *Skool Daze*. Eric, a schoolboy who really needs to get access to the school safe where the end of year reports are kept, must activate school shields and obtain codes from the teachers to access the safe. Not that easy but superbly original and a deserved hit.



» *Steve Davis Snooker* (Spectrum): Probably the best snooker game on the Spectrum and more user-friendly than most.

With the Christmas sales period looming, Activision had been busy. Among its delights on offer were *Decathlon*, *River Raid*, *Zenji*, *Pitfall II*, *H.E.R.O.*, *Beamrider* and *Toy Bizarre*, which would be available for C64, Spectrum, ColecoVision and Atari 2600/5200. Even MSX would get to break joysticks with *Decathlon*…

US Gold was readying itself for a host of arcade conversion releases. With tie-ins with Sega and Bally Midway, some of the best arcade games of the time would be available, with such delights as *Tapper*, *Spy Hunter*, *Zaxxon*, *Up 'N Down* and *Congo Bongo*.

The Imagine Software saga may well have been played out in magazines, but there was still an involuntary twitch in the Imagine corpse with the news that the BBC had been filming a documentary, the infamous *Commercial Breaks*, following Ocean and Imagine and their games development processes. Fortunately, the last throes of Imagine were also captured. This highly anticipated piece of gaming history, the BBC announced, would be aired on 18 December at 8pm. Get ready with that Betamax video recorder folks…

Among the monthly reviews, Crash Smash were awarded to *Pyjamarama* (Mikro-Gen), *Delta Wing* (Creative Sparks), *The Legend Of Avalon* (Hewson), *Booty* (Firebird), *Jasper* (Micromega) and *Kentilla* (Micromega).

Personal Computer Games gave its PCG Hit to *Elite* (Acornsoft, BBC), *Strangeloop* (Virgin, Spectrum), *Storm Warrior* (Front Runner, C64), *Trollie Wallie* (Interceptor, C64), *Suicide Express* (Gremlin Graphics, C64), *Cashman* (Microdeal, Dragon 32), *Psytraxx* (The Edge, Spectrum) and *Kokotoni Wilf* (Elite, Spectrum).

Big K enthused about *Electron Invaders* (Micropower, Electron), *Uncle Claude* (Alligata, BBC) and *The House Of Usher* (Anirog, C64).

THIS MONTH IN…

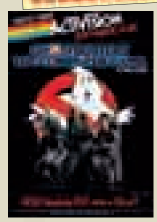
YOUR COMMODORE



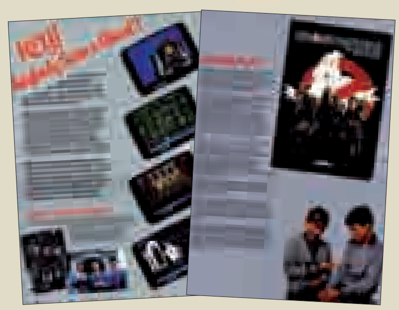
The second issue of *Your Commodore* featured a review of the SX-64, a portable C64 (please use portable in the loosest sense possible). It looked like something from a Seventies sci-fi movie with its small in-built screen and its bulky-looking case was something Samsonite would've been proud to have produced.



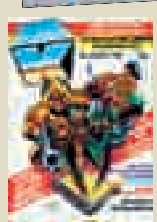
ACTIVISION NEWSLETTER



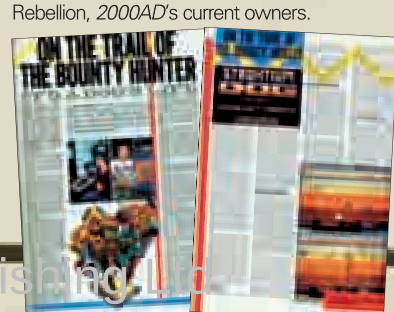
The winter newsletter arrived with news that the new *Ghostbusters* had been released. Activision highlighted the unique franchise feature of the game, which allowed you to transfer your account details and earnings from your game to any other format of the game in the world.



BIG K



Big K featured a stunning piece of cover artwork featuring the character Johnny Alpha drawn by his co-creator, Carlos Ezquerra, which led into a feature on Quicksilva and its two new *Strontium Dog* games. Mark Eyles, Quicksilva's main man, later became head of design at Rebellion, *2000AD*'s current owners.



NOVEMBER 1984



MUSIC

1. I Feel For You (Chaka Khan)
2. Wild Boys (Duran Duran)
3. Freedom (Wham!)
4. The Wanderer (Status Quo)
5. Caribbean Queen (Billy Ocean)



SPECTRUM

1. Daley Thompson's Decathlon (Ocean)
2. Knight Lore (Ultimate)
3. Jet Set Willy (Software Projects)
4. Full Throttle (Micromega)
5. Sabre Wulf (Ultimate)



COMMODORE 64

1. Daley Thompson's Decathlon (Ocean)
2. Beach Head (US Gold Access)
3. Decathlon (Activision)
4. Valhalla (Legend)
5. Death Star Interceptor (System 3)

BBC

1. Elite (Acornsoft)
2. Jetpac (Ultimate)
3. Frak! (Aardvark)
4. Mr. Ee! (Micropower)
5. Fortress (Pace)



BACK TO THE NINETIES

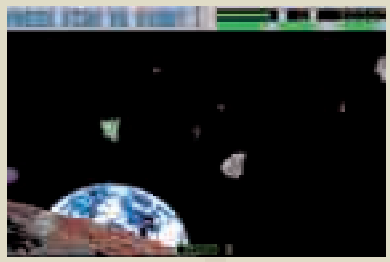


THE LATEST NEWS FROM FEBRUARY 1991

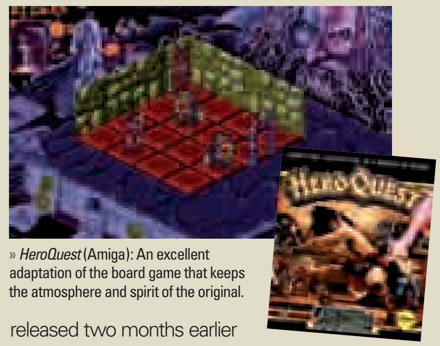
FEBRUARY 1991 – the Sonic boom begins, Jetman goes Solar, dodgy Golden Axe axed, Bart and family plan world domination, board game gets reborn and Elite is given a makeover. Richard Burton takes a leisurely stroll through the Green Hill Zone…



» *RoadBlasters* (Atari Lynx): Shoot cars, collect the fuel orbs and avoid being killed. A top racing game for the Lynx.



» *Blasteroids* (Atari ST): An enjoyable and enhanced version of a classic retro game. Pimp my *Asteroids*, anyone?



» *HeroQuest* (Amiga): An excellent adaptation of the board game that keeps the atmosphere and spirit of the original.

A new platform game for the Sega Mega Drive was previewed at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, leaving everyone waiting impatiently for its release. The game, *Sonic The Hedgehog*, was marketed as a fast-moving side-on platformer with stunning graphics and original touches.

Platform games have always been ten-a-penny, but *Sonic* introduced a world of blistering speed and eye-wateringly pretty graphics. The corkscrews, loops, hills and occasional underwater dunking all required the physics of the game to work too and they did so superbly. It was released in Europe and the USA in June 1991 with Japan getting their release a month later.

This little blue hedgehog would boost the Mega Drive's image as the must-have console, while turning Sega into a leading light in videogames development through the Nineties. It also had a character to finally challenge Nintendo's Mario…

Atari, fresh from its price reduction of the Lynx, promised three quality arcade conversions for the handheld. The games were *Rygar*, *Rampage* and *RoadBlasters*.

Atari also published a list of games to be released throughout 1991; no doubt to make the Lynx even more attractive and indeed some of the promised titles looked quite enticing. Included were *S.T.U.N. Runner*, *Vindicators*, *A.P.B.*, *Gridrunner* and *3D Barrage*.

Rare revealed it was bringing back Jetman. Having starred in *Jetpac* and *Lunar Jetman* on the Speccy and BBC and having released *Solar Jetman: Hunt For The Golden Warpship* on the NES, Rare thought it was time for Jetman to return to his proverbial home on the Spectrum.

Software Creations was tasked with developing and converting *Solar Jetman* to the Spectrum and C64, with Storm due to release the finished articles in the spring. Sadly both versions were pulled before release, because the NES version suffered such poor sales.

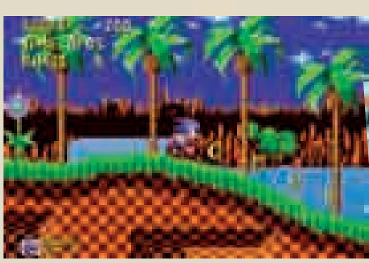
It was only with the perseverance of the fantastic Games That Weren't website, that the C64 version development disks were finally tracked down, patched together and a finished game available to play. The Spectrum version still lies undiscovered and we really want it…

Golden Axe was suffering teething problems. The first batches of the game released two months earlier were still in shops, but had since been found to be lacking one level. Level 5 had been omitted but Virgin confirmed it knew of the problem and that it had been caused by a fault at the cassette duplication plant. All the flawed copies were recalled from suppliers and stores with the complete unblemished version ready to replace it on the shelves.

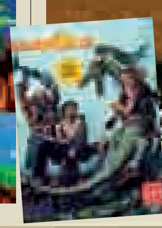
Sadly, the game was a disappointment, graphically a disaster, and despite a glowing review and Gold Medal from *Zzap!* magazine, it would've been far better missing a few more levels… all of them for instance.

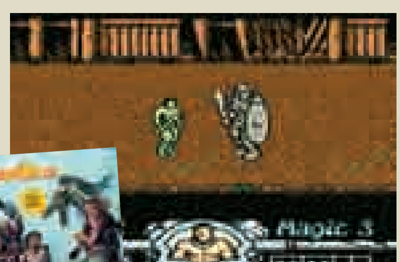
The TV treat known as *The Simpsons*, was finally going to get the videogame treatment thanks to Acclaim. It was ready to release *The Simpsons: Bart Vs. The Space Mutants*, across all manner of gaming platforms including NES, Master System, Mega Drive, Amstrad, Spectrum and Game Gear.

Although the superlatives never really flowed in the reviews, they all sold well enough for Acclaim to embark on two further money-spinning *Simpsons* projects; *Bart Vs. The World* and the Game Boy title, *Bart Simpson's Escape From Camp Deadly*.

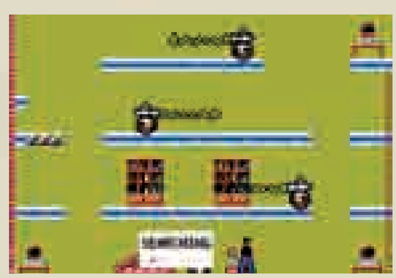


» *Sonic The Hedgehog* (Sega Mega Drive): The game that caught the imagination of a generation of gamers… and the wallets of their parents…





» *Golden Axe* (C64): While many versions of the game were good on other systems, the C64 version suffered from ropey graphics.



» *Impossible Mission* (SMS): A perfect balance of puzzles and arcade action with no sign of Tom Cruise anywhere…

1991



FEBRUARY NEWS

The Gulf War continues with air strikes and bombings relentlessly eroding the Iraqi regime's resistance. However, US President, George Bush, further pressurised Saddam Hussein by issuing a deadline for the withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait. Failure to comply would result in the war being taken to the next stage, a land offensive. Unsurprisingly, Baghdad immediately condemned the ultimatum.

The land offensive began on 24 February and just one day later Iraqi troops began retreating from Kuwait. By 26 February, Kuwait City had been liberated. Saddam issued an immediate withdrawal.

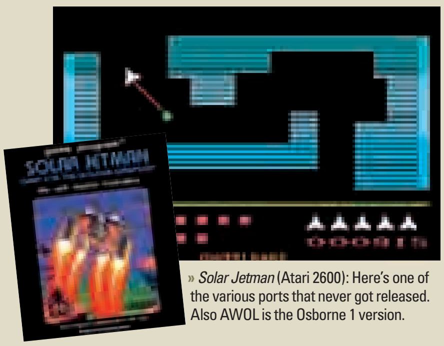
» Hannibal Lecter goes to John Menzies to pick himself out a home computer. A terrifying movie featuring *Roland In Time…*



» On the basis they were taking part in the Golf War, Britain sent in its best aircraft carrier and clubhouse…

28 February, President Bush announced that a ceasefire had been called after Iraq had accepted all 12 of the UN's resolutions, which included accepting that they had no claims to Kuwait and its oil fields. They also wanted the return of all Kuwaiti hostages and Allied prisoners. The Gulf War was officially over… for now…

The Silence Of The Lambs had its US premiere. It starred Anthony Hopkins as Hannibal Lecter, who was infamously misquoted as saying, "A games reviewer once tried to test me. I ate his Amstrad with some jelly beans and a lime shandy."



» *Solar Jetman* (Atari 2600): Here's one of the various ports that never got released. Also AWOL is the Osborne 1 version.



» *Thunder Blade* (Amiga): Blow stuff up with Sega's helicopter equivalent of *After Burner.* The Amiga version was pants.

If you were a *HeroQuest* gamer, the news that Gremlin had snared the videogame licence would surely have got you rubbing your trousers with glee. *HeroQuest* was created by MB Games and Games Workshop and was set in their *Warhammer* universe. It saw you battle through player-created dungeons while fending off monsters and hunting for treasure.

The computer versions for Amiga, ST, CPC, Spectrum and C64, would play more like a single-player RPG but considering the task of developing *HeroQuest*, the results succeeded in conveying the feel of the board game.

Rainbird unleashed a treat for PC users with the news that it was ready to release an updated version of *Elite*, the classic space trading game. *Elite Plus* would essentially play the same as previous versions but with enhanced sound, graphics and a newly designed icon-driven menu system. *Elite Plus* would set you back £34.99 or alternatively, we'll swap you for an Ingram Pulse Laser.



» *Elite Plus* (PC): The old favourite is souped up for the PC age. Same old game, same old thing, just nicer graphics…

For all miserly 16-bit gamers a budget extravaganza ensued. US Gold unveiled several classic re-releases on its newly formed Kixx 16-bit label. Among the £7.99-priced titles would be *Blasteroids*, *Barbarian II* and *Thunder Blade*.

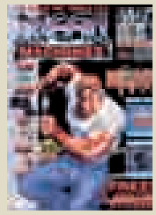
Not to be outdone, Psygnosis had also formed its own new cheapo games label entitled Sizzlers. Prices would vary between £7.99 and £9.99 with the majority of the games being from its own back catalogue including *Baal* and *Blood Money*.

C&VG gave C&VG Hits to *Team Suzuki* (Gremlin, Atari ST), *Impossible Mission* (US Gold, SMS), *Lemmings* (Psygnosis, Amiga), *Jupiter's Masterdrive* (Ubisoft, Atari ST), *Carvup* (Core Design, Amiga) and *Castle Of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse* (Sega, Mega Drive).

Zero stuck its Zero Hero award on *Turrican II* (Rainbow Arts, Amiga), *Crash Course* (Mirrorsoft, PC), *Prince Of Persia* (Domark, Amiga) and *Deuteros* (Activision, Amiga).

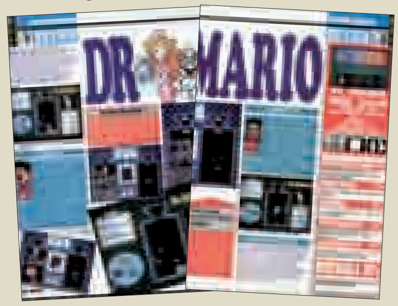
Meanwhile, its console equivalent, the Console Classic, got stamped all over *John Madden Football* (Electronic Arts, Mega Drive) and *A Boy And His Blob* (Jaleco, Game Boy).

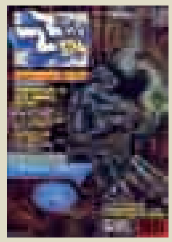
THIS MONTH IN…



MEAN MACHINES

Mario, the Italian plumber had got rid of the wrench (I say…) and bought a doctorate off the internet for his newest game, *Dr Mario*, on the NES. This pill-tossing puzzler could've been seen as cashing in on the popularity of *Tetris*. However, *Dr Mario* was extremely playable and addictive in its own right.

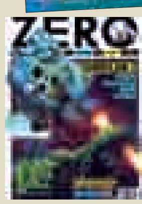




ZZAP!

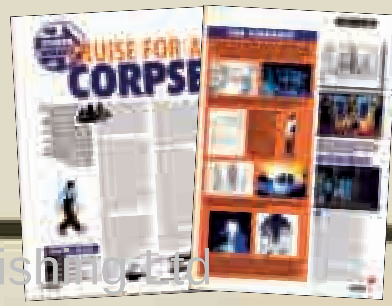
A good month for C64 games saw *Turrican II* by Rainbow Arts receive a well-deserved Gold Medal and a rating of 97%. Terrific graphics, superb music and splendid gameplay, (albeit not that difficult) make this a true classic and one of the best C64 games ever.





ZERO

Zero previewed the Delphine/ US Gold game, *Cruise For A Corpse*. No, it's nothing to do with necrophilia but an Agatha Christie-style point-and-click adventure set in 1927 in which you take on the role of the police inspector investigating a murder aboard a cruise ship. A superbly atmospheric game.



CHARTS

FEBRUARY 1991



AMIGA

1 RoboCop 2 (Ocean)
2 Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles (Mirrorsoft)
3 Golden Axe (Virgin)
4 Silent Service II (Microprose)
5 St Dragon (Sales Curve/Storm)



ATARI ST

1 F-19 Stealth Fighter (Microprose)
2 Supremacy (Virgin/ Melbourne House)
3 M1 Tank Platoon (Microprose)
4 Their Finest Hour (Lucasfilm/US Gold)
5 Corporation (Core Design)



PC

1 Wonderland (Virgin/ Magnetic Scrolls)
2 Teenage Mutant Hero Turtles (Microprose)
3 Test Drive III (Accolade)
4 Silent Service II (Microprose)
5 Team Yankee (Empire)

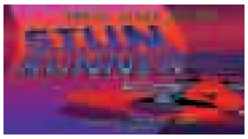
MUSIC

1 Do The Bartman (The Simpsons)
2 3am Eternal (KLF)
3 (I Wanna Give You) Devotion (Nomad feat Mikee Freedom)
4 Wiggle It (2 In a Room)
5 Only You (Praise)

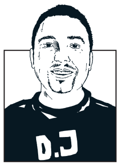


S.T.U.N. RUNNER

I FEEL THE NEED… THE NEED FOR SPEED



- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI GAMES
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **GENRE:** RACING
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £200+



HISTORY

Few games in the arcades were as exciting to play in 1989 as Atari's *S.T.U.N. Runner*. Ditching the realistic, yet oh-so-slow approach of the *Hard Drivin'* games, Atari instead stuck all those available polygons into a futuristic racer that had the player hurtling down a series of sickeningly fast tunnels, while blasting away at any vehicle stupid enough to get in their way.

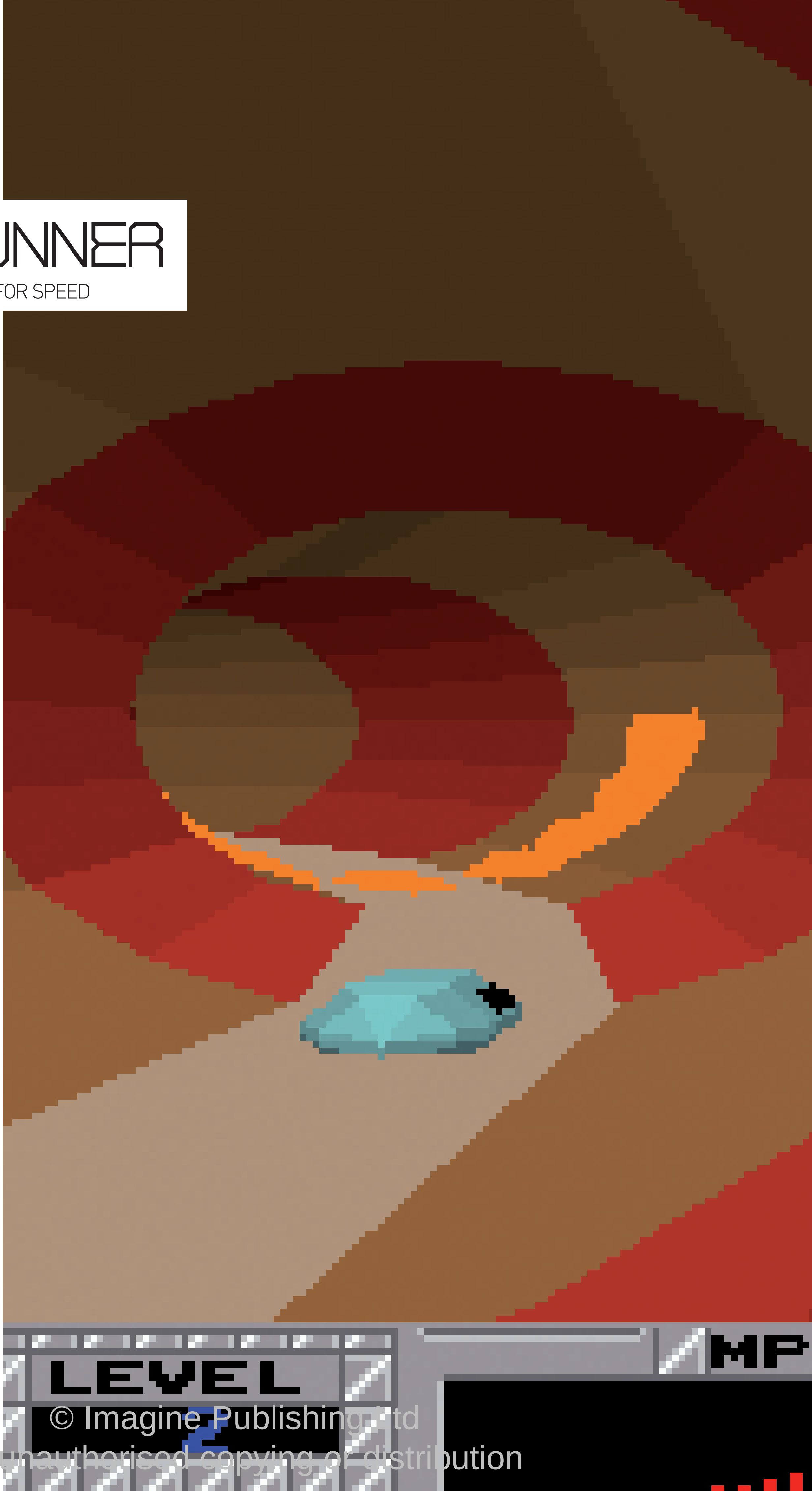
Set against a strict time limit and with more twists and turns than the average episode of *Prison Break*, it was *S.T.U.N. Runner*'s feeling of unadulterated speed that set it apart from other racers of the time. Like *OutRun*, it felt unique and instilled a feeling of excitement in you that few other racers were able to match.

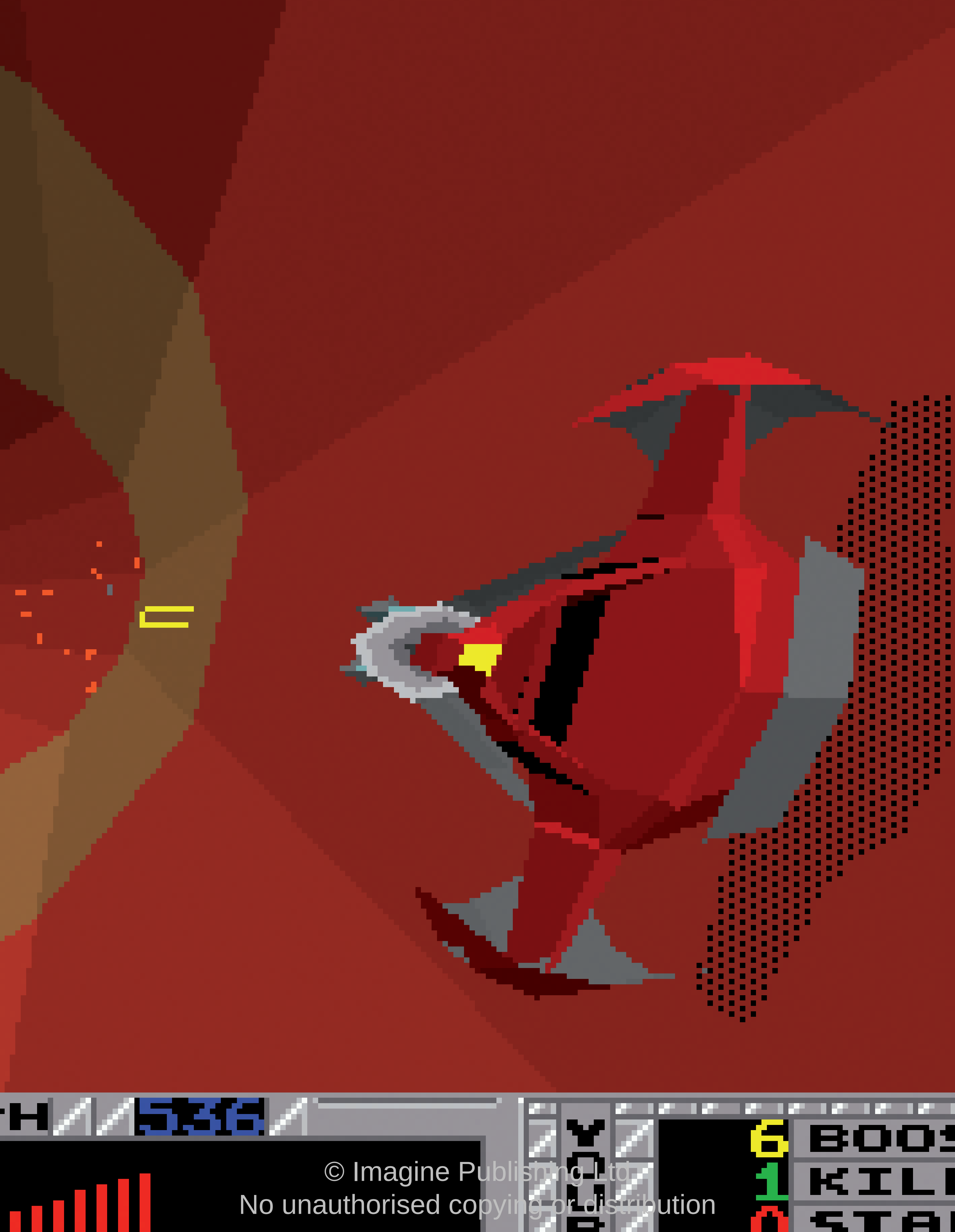
Starting off in a bare-bones pod and tackling a fairly sedate opening course, *S.T.U.N. Runner*'s real fun doesn't start until you've completed that beginning stretch and can start the first stage with a fully tooled-up craft. Huge wings get attached to your humble craft, a giant gun gets plonked on the roof and you're off.

Ditching the need for an accelerator, speed is gained in *S.T.U.N. Runner* by simply avoiding collisions, running over boost pads, and driving on the fastest portion of the game's many tunnels.

Granted, it starts off fairly easy, but the snaking tracks soon become littered with a variety of deadly hazards. While many of them can be shot to smithereens with your laser, it usually pays to pick up a Shock Wave when available, as it destroys everything in view. Although it's a traditional one-use weapon, you can get a refill by completing a stage or collecting a set number of stars that are dotted around each stage.

With its beautifully sleek cabinet, crisp polygons, hectic gameplay and raucous sound effects, *S.T.U.N. Runner* remains an excellent racer that's as exhilarating as it is fun to play. What a shame then that only Atari's Lynx walked away with anything that could be considered a competent conversion. Oh, and the S.T.U.N. stands for Spread Tunnel Underground Network.




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ANT ATTACK!

MENTION THE NAME **SANDY WHITE** AND FEW PEOPLE UNDER 35 WILL RAISE AN EYEBROW. HOWEVER, 25 YEARS AGO WHEN WE HEARD IT FIRST, THE REACTION WAS PROFOUND; EYEBROWS WERE RAISED AND JAWS DROPPED AS MIKE ANDERIESZ RECALLS. 3D ANT ATTACK WAS A LANDMARK AND EVEN MORE SO IN HINDSIGHT, ONCE THE REST OF THE GAMES INDUSTRY HAD CAUGHT UP ENOUGH TO CREATE AT LEAST ONE GENRE AROUND IT





» Sandy White today – still confident the ants will rise again.

Birth of the Ants

The bulk of *Ant Attack* was written in just 15 weeks in the summer of 1983 and published in time for Christmas by Quicksilva – an example of just how fast and instinctive games development used to be. These days, you would be lucky to exchange contracts in the same time period. Then again, it's difficult to imagine a game so technically ahead of its rivals not being snapped up quickly in any age.

The plot was as simple as it was compelling; one lone hero searching for his (or her) sweetheart. He finds himself on the outskirts of Antescher, a city of grey, Lego-like buildings, some recognisable, others bleakly abstract. After wandering around taking in the scenery, he at last spies his companion, slumped over a pile of bricks – is she dead or merely unconscious, how did she get that way? Such minor questions soon become irrelevant, however, when the first enemy hones into view, towering over some of the structures, mandibles raised, moving forward in a jerky but precise manner… the ants are upon you and the chase is on!

One of the many remarkable things about *Ant Attack* is that White was neither a game nor a sci-fi fan when he wrote it. In fact, he wasn't even a programmer; he was a 23-year-old sculptor who had just finished his postgraduate degree at Edinburgh Art College. He had always been interested in 'Hammer Horror' movies, though – a useful combination for the chilling scenario that was to follow. His first computer had been an MK14 (Sinclair's very first kit computer) two years previously. Not that this was where *Ant Attack* began, nor the Spectrum on which it eventually found recognition.

"I'd borrowed an Acorn Atom from a friend," Sandy recalls. "I was just playing around – it was fascinating to have something that made graphics appear on a TV, my precious computers didn't have a TV display… so I started out writing bits of code and getting to print them onto the screen; first an isometric cube, then a series of random cubes. Sometimes they lined up, making a column – it looked quite 3D to me. So instead of making the positioning entirely random, I lined them up by their own vertices. From there you could clearly recognise something that looked like the world of *Ant Attack*."

Whether isometric 3D had been done before is a matter for debate, (see 'First In Its Class?' boxout on page 30). However, at a time when most Spectrum games were arcade clones with a smattering of original platform games or shoot-'em-ups, here was a fully formed 3D city in which you could go anywhere and do just about anything.

"I'd just seen the movie *Superman II*, so I made a small superman sprite fly over these blocks. I've still got a box of C15 cassettes somewhere with 'Superman' written across the label and I guess that was the very first version of *Ant Attack*. Then it just evolved out of simple play elements – the cityscape emerged first then it was just a matter of finding something there and another human made sense."

Building Antescher

The cityscape took most of the early effort with Antescher needing to be fully mapped out in the upper 16K of memory. There were around 20 structures, later given names for a magazine feature, some relating to their appearance (ie 'The Pyramid') others like 'Droxtrap' little more than 'fnar-fnar' student anagrams. Designing the sprites, however, was a much more serious business.

With RAM at a truly ridiculous minimum (the visible grenade on your hero's belt had to be squeezed down to a single pixel) the whole city plus its human and ant protagonists were painstakingly drawn on squared paper. The source code was handwritten on A4 paper in Z80 assembly language and assembled by hand – the graphic engine known as 'Softsolid', which

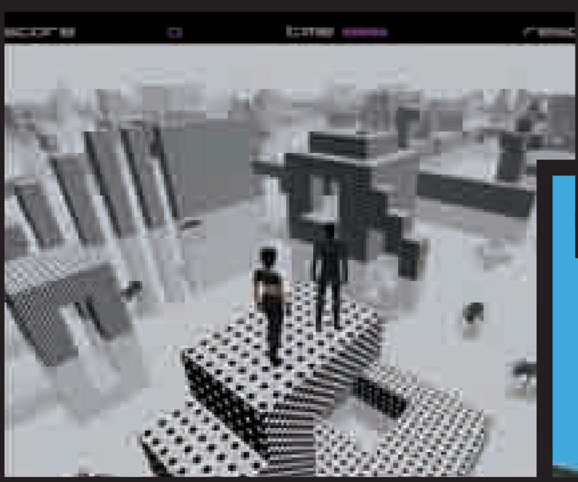


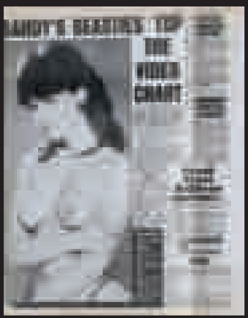
DEVELOPER PROFILE

Like many of the Eighties Britsoft pioneers, Sandy started out as a one-man band. However, unlike most of the others, he pretty much stayed that way.

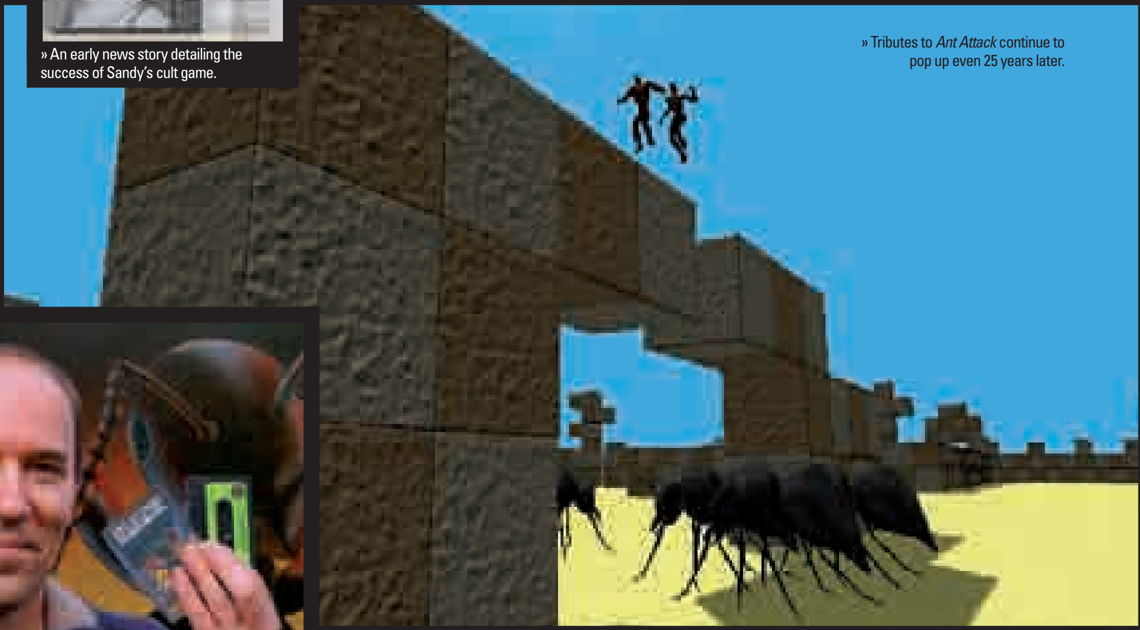
Having completed *Ant Attack* with the help of girlfriend Angela Sutherland, in 1984 the two set up a development company called Spaceman. Both contributed to design ideas before Sandy took over the coding and Angela concentrated on the business side. Their first game was *Zombie Zombie* (1984), another technical masterpiece but not the commercial success everyone had predicted. *I Of The Mask* (1985) did even worse, managing to generate negative royalties. Finally, the innovative interactive cartoon called *Dick Special* only got as far as a technical demo and some optimistic magazine previews, before its publisher, Rainbird, was sold to Microprose in 1989. *Dick Special* never saw the light of day, and Spaceman itself folded a year or so later as Sandy's relationship with Angela broke down

And that, as far as games were concerned, was that.





» An early news story detailing the success of Sandy's cult game.



» Tributes to *Ant Attack* continue to pop up even 25 years later.

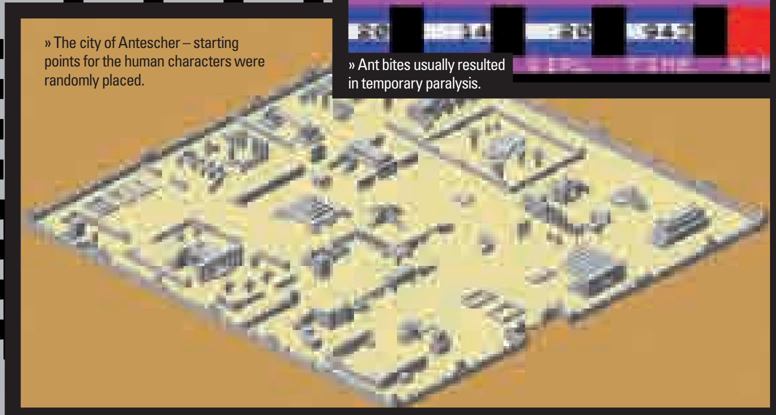


ANT ATTACK!

"Feeling bullish, Sandy demanded 50 per cent royalties and walked out with 25 per cent – still an excellent deal for the time"



» Ant bites usually resulted in temporary paralysis.



» The city of Antescher – starting points for the human characters were randomly placed.

Sandy unsuccessfully tried to patent at a time when UK law still suggested software could not be patented at all.

Having achieved a look and feel for the game, it was then just a question of finding the theme. Here again, when a breakthrough came Sandy recalls it was more by accident than design.

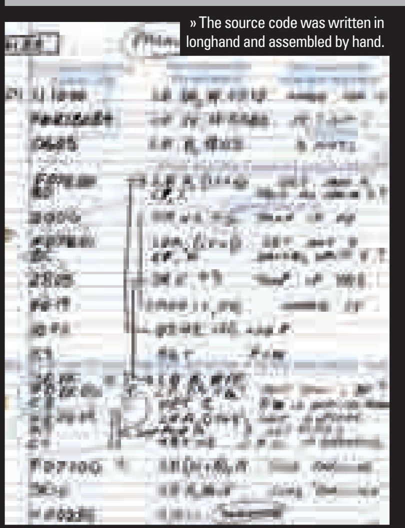
"At first, the enemy looked like black logs moving around, they didn't have legs, for instance, so I had no idea what they were," he explains. "Then I added a simple flocking algorithm and from their collective movement they immediately resembled ants. It was not a conscious decision."

Nevertheless, once ants were chosen, he quickly set about hand-drawing the eight sprite objects in the game – the boy and girl, up to five ants and the box of grenades. Because of the game's four possible orientations, each sprite had to be mapped out from four angles with two animated positions for each. There was also an aeroplane, never used in the game but later discovered lurking in the code from an earlier design. Last of all, a simple on-screen scanner was added to warn you of approaching danger by flashing green or red.

Sound was fairly unremarkable, with clicks for walking, a sickening squidgy sound for falling and a more strident effect for getting stung. Text messages displayed at key points in the game using the Spectrum's ROM text printing routines. The most common of these was the chilling 'Paralysed by an ant!' – usually accompanied by the animation of an ant erratically biting into your unresponsive corpse. Up to five ants could chase or attack at the same time, and you could survive up to 12 of their paralysing stings although not in quick succession. In retaliation, they could be stunned by jumping on them, allowing you time to escape or attack with grenades. Get cornered by several, however, or fall from over two blocks high and it was usually game over.

With the engine, objects and themes in place and ported over to the Spectrum, it was now a question of adding all the tweaks that made *Ant Attack* so much more realistic than anything around back in 1983. The fact that guns weren't involved, that it was just your hero's ingenuity against the ants, the way you could choose the sex of your hero – more a result of art school political correctness than any strong design compulsion – the delight as your partner leapt in the air exclaiming: 'Take me away from all this! My hero!'

It all marked an attention to detail that no previous game had attempted and, even three months into the coding, Sandy already knew how special it was. He sent an early VHS tape to Sinclair Research, showing a few basic buildings and a character making its escape. Sinclair politely returned it with a note explaining that it didn't have a VHS player.



» The source code was written in longhand and assembled by hand.

Overnight sensation

At around the same time a publisher called Quicksilva was beginning to make an impact; the first label to use full colour inlays for its games at a time of primarily photocopied or even handwritten inlays.

"There may have been a phone number on one of the inlays, so I called them and ranted and raved about this amazing game where you could jump on walls and go through windows in 3D and everything… I'm sure they thought I was making it up, but when I sent the demo in, I heard back from them really quickly," says Sandy.

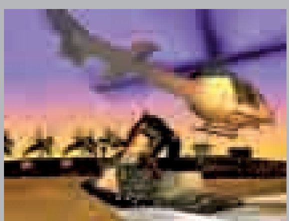
Now feeling understandably bullish, Sandy demanded 50 per cent royalties and walked out with 25 per cent – still an excellent deal for the time. When the game was finished in October, the duplicators wheeled into action and the launch was hastily arranged.

"Quicksilva had booked a suite at the Barbican, close to one of the trade shows," Sandy recalls. "They had a press release out and a small audience of journalists turned up to watch the presentation. I remember an audible gasp when they showed it… I guess it was amazing for the time… Straight afterwards, I did a radio interview – it was literally in a broom cupboard. Some guy was shoving a mic in my mouth while I had one foot in a bucket!"

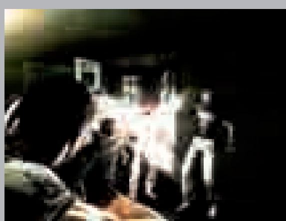
The acclaim for *Ant Attack* was immediate, with *Crash* awarding it 83% in February 1984, including 100% for graphics. Infuriatingly, it was beaten to game of the month by *3D*

IN TODAY'S MARKET

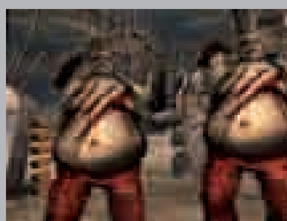
Vice City Stories (2007/Rockstar)
Comparing *GTA* to *Ant Attack* seems far-fetched, yet Antescher was also a world of predefined structures where your hero could do anything. He could leap off buildings, and in *Zombie Zombie* he could take a friend with him. Given that at least one of the *GTA* team was an *Ant Attack* 'freak', the link isn't so unlikely.



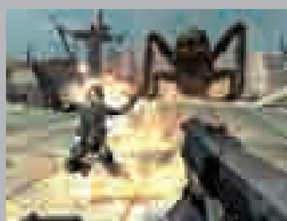
Resident Evil 5 (2009/Capcom)
Capcom's original 1996 *Resident Evil* game coined the term 'survival horror', if not the genre. The latest iteration may have looks to die for, but the action is still clearly derived from the genre's two main ancestors; George Romero's *Night Of The Living Dead* and, of course, Sandy White's *Ant Attack*.



House Of The Dead 2 & 3 (2008/Sega)
Survival horror takes many different forms now, with Sega's dumbed-down approach still making easy money. The addition of laser-sighted weapons may take away some of the blind terror of surviving on wits alone, but the basic formula hasn't changed in 25 years.

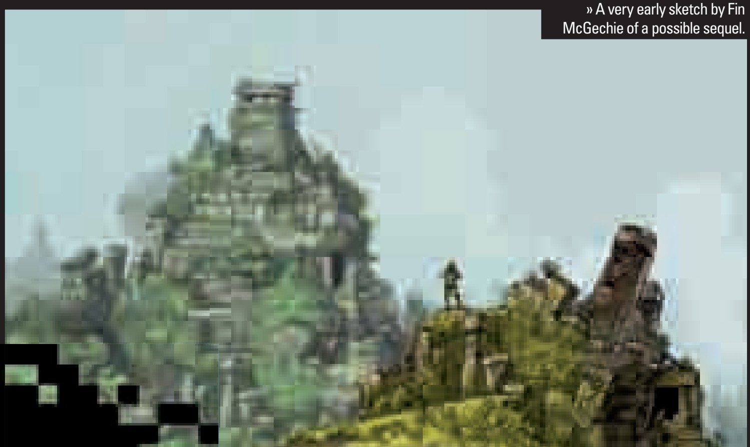


Starship Troopers (2005/Empire)
Unfortunately, the most recent videogame to be based on Robert A Heinlein's *Starship Troopers* novel, was a massive disappointment. However, Paul Verhoeven's 1997 *Starship Troopers* movie achieved a level of bug-phobic terror that Sandy White would have been extremely proud of.



Lego Batman (2008/Warner Bros)
Given that the famous plastic bricks have been around since 1949, Sandy clearly loses this 'who came first?' debate. Ironically, while Antescher became a hit by mimicking Lego-style constructions, Lego only found videogame success after abandoning 'brickiness' in favour of aping *Star Wars*, *Indiana Jones* and *Batman*.



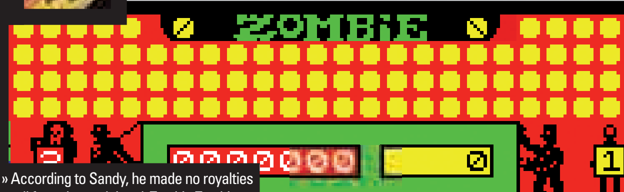


» A very early sketch by Fin McGechie of a possible sequel.



» *Crash* magazine's review that made *Ant Attack* an instant hit.





» According to Sandy, he made no royalties at all from the acclaimed *Zombie Zombie*.

Deathchase, a fine example of Sod's law whereby you wait 2,000 years for one game with 3D in the title and two show up in the same month.

What little criticism there was for *Ant Attack* focused on its control system, with 12 keys required to play – four to switch perspective, four to hurl grenades, one for rotating your hero and another for moving forward and finally another key to jump. "They are quite difficult to manipulate," noted *Crash*'s first review with admirable restraint.

However, such minor quibbles did nothing to stop the game flying off the shelves during Christmas 1983, although Sandy remains convinced he never saw the full picture. All in all, he claims he made royalties on a mere 50,000 copies of *Ant Attack*, far fewer than most estimates of how well the game actually sold worldwide. And there were other unwelcome side effects to celebrity; the media attention on his girlfriend, Angela Sutherland, for instance.

"Angela contributed to the graphics and some of the city design," he says. "She famously contributed a part of one of the ants, the mandibles. I remember having enormous trouble with it, and she just sorted it out. But then she began getting a fantastic amount of credit, I feel because she was a woman. It didn't bother me at the time, but it was really my baby. I ended up in a situation about 15 years later where somebody asked me: 'Didn't you have something to do with *Ant Attack*?'"

Crash & Burn

Unfortunately, the continued focus on his very first game was symptomatic of a bigger problem for Sandy. For all its brilliance, *Ant Attack* turned out to be the only hit he ever produced. Which begs the question of why he never made a sequel, surely a no-brainer in a time when the likes of Ocean was already building empires on the back of successful franchises?

"I guess I didn't have a business brain," Sandy explains. "And nobody told me 'do the sequel!' All that seems obvious now, but it wasn't at the time. So instead I came up with a new idea, I wanted to create gameplay that was more involving… I thought it was clever, but I missed the point of what gameplay was all about, which is the audience."

That idea was a semi-sequel called *Zombie Zombie* (1984) where ants were replaced by fluorescent glowing zombies (*Resident Evil*, anyone?), but with the same visual style and simple objective – escape. It proved to be a hit with critics (with a strident use of colour and innovative polyphonic music) but sold poorly. The game that followed (*I Of The Mask*) did even worse, and for much the same reason, according to Sandy.

"It was more a programming exercise than a game, I was interested in seeing how far the Spectrum could go and no one had done vector graphics on a Spectrum. But by 1985 the industry had got to the point where expectations were outstripping what one man could produce."

In fact, only one more title emerged from Sandy's once-pioneering pen (see 'Developer Profile' boxout on page 27.)

READY FOR REMAKE

ANT ATTACK!



FIRST IN ITS CLASS?

So was *Ant Attack* either the world's first isometric 3D, survival horror, or unisex game? There are rival contenders to each claim…

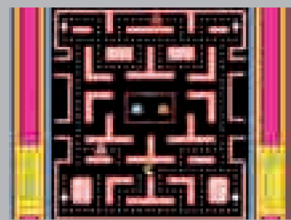
Survival horror
Survival horror can be dated to before the phrase was coined in 1996. There was *Haunted House* for the 2600 (1981) – an icon hunt around a mansion. If you count arcades there's *Robotron* (1982). However, for the combination of escaping monsters using only human ingenuity, *Ant Attack* still has the strongest claim.

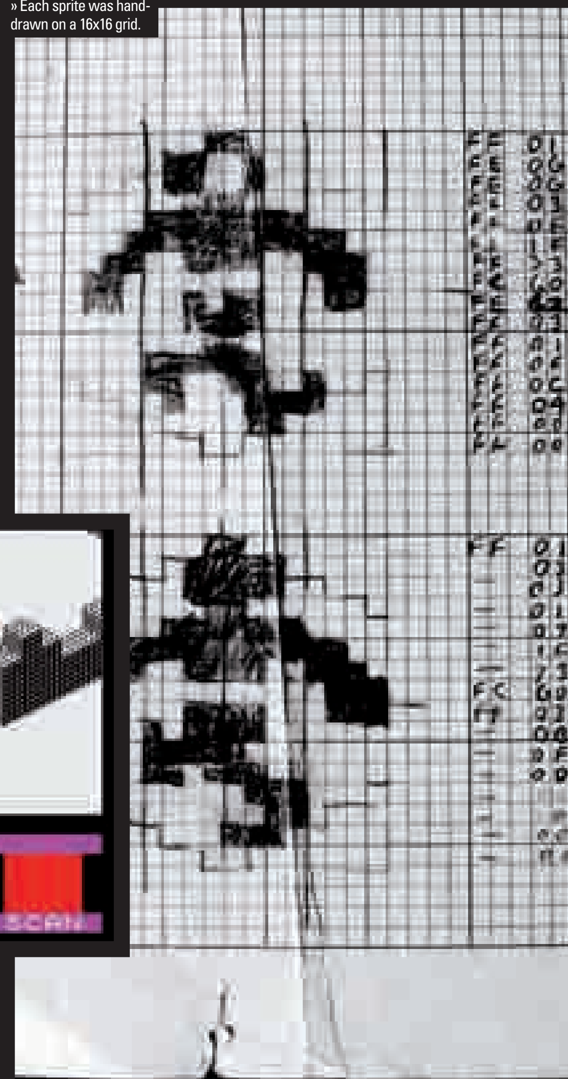
Isometric 3D
After years of side-scrolling, *Zaxxon* looked different. As well as avoiding enemies, you had to compensate for perspective, weaving in and out of the screen to negotiate walls and barriers. *Zaxxon* wasn't 3D, just a side-scroller viewed from a different angle. The same can be said of *Q*bert*, which appeared in 1982, too.

Unisex
Unusually for the time, *Ant Attack* also gave you the choice of playing as a female character – but was it the first? In a word, no. *Ms Pac-Man* let you play as a female in 1981 and being able to choose the sex of your character was a standard feature of text adventures and RPGs from the seminal *MUD* (1978) onwards.

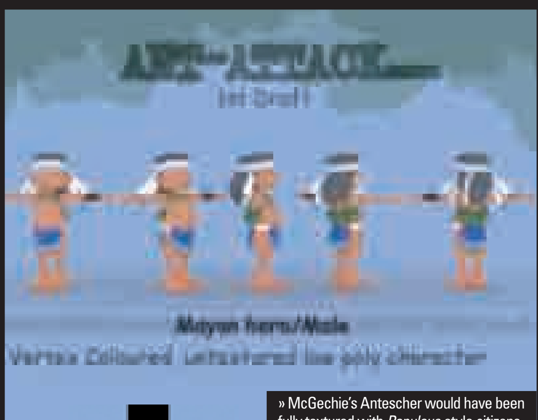








» Each sprite was hand-drawn on a 16x16 grid.



» McGechie's Antescher would have been fully textured with *Populous*-style citizens.



» The moment you meet your mate.



For a while he worked on creating a ragdoll physics engine, pre-empting middleware solutions like Havok and still looking impressive today (www.youtube.com/watch?v=jA1-6eu7QlI). However, by the early-Nineties he'd reverted to his role as inventor, developing an inkjet printing machine and designing embedded components for theme park animatronics, including a singing reindeer and a Santa Claus. These days, if he misses the games industry, he tries not to show it, although there is one games-related subject that remains unfinished business…

Ready for remake?

Sandy has often considered making a sequel to *Ant Attack*, unfortunately the question of what form this should take has never been resolved. And although he has never been short of advice, tangible interest from publishers has been less forthcoming. The most promising potential sequel happened ten years ago when he bumped into Fin McGechie at a party. McGechie was one of original members of Bullfrog who went on to work on *Grand Theft Auto* among other classic titles.

"I'd always been a massive *Ant Attack* fan," recalls Fin. "So it was a real pleasure meeting the guy who had got me into games in the first place. We started talking about how a sequel might look. At the time it was all *Mario 64* and cartoon 3D engines – so that's where we were heading… 3D soft-shaded cartoon, easy on the eye, non-violent, very Saturday morning… very Nintendo."

Discussions between the two got as far as preliminary designs before other priorities intruded for both parties. McGechie went on to found Mucky Foot and currently works for casual games developer, Covert. Even now, he remains convinced the ants could and should rise again.

"I still knock ideas out and send them to him…" says Fin. "Sprites, 3D objects, characters. It's a bit sad, I guess – I think he humours me. The best thing would be to take six months off and just knock it out on the Nintendo DS. I'd quit my job tomorrow to do it!"

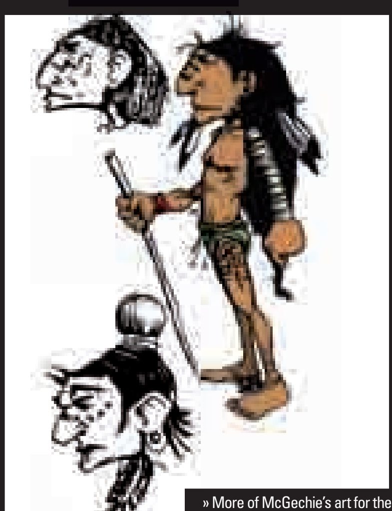
Another unashamed fan is Ben Simpson, ex-member of Creature Labs and currently creative director of NiceTech. When Ben got round to re-envisioning *Ant Attack* in 2002, he went right back to how he recalled originally playing it.

"I remember the city landscapes, advanced for their time in isometric 3D – and it felt like it could become a vast virtual space with everyone fighting on the same side," Ben says. "The original was a social experience for us, me and my nerdy friend – we used to play until you died and then my nerdy friend took over. "

As a result, Ben began exploring the possibility of *Ant Attack* as a massively multiplayer online game, opening another set of discussions on the subject with Sandy.

"There are very few MMOs that have this horror vibe to them…" says Ben. "Everyone playing on the same side is very interesting from a social perspective, the psychology involved, how they come together, drift apart, make things happen. Humans versus the ants."

Sadly, NiceTech was unable to devote resources for much the same reason as Mucky Foot. Ben is currently working on an MMO called *Tronji* in conjunction with a new BBC kids



» More of McGechie's art for the sequel that never appeared.



"Sandy has often considered making an Ant Attack sequel, but the question of what form it should take has never been resolved"

show. However, he too remains open to the idea of some form of *Ant Attack 2* at a later stage.

"With casual games on the rise it's a much more suitable time now for an evolution of the original spec – the MMO spin would be a great way to go," Ben reveals.

And there have been plenty of tributes too. Some merely updating the original game, others taking a bolder stab at a remake. Urban Interactive's take (http://urbaninteractive.net/portal/) uses much of Sandy's original map design but adds much more detail and a more user-friendly interface. Of course, an emulated Java version of Sandy's original code can still be found on his website (http://sandywhite.co.uk/fun/ants).

So what does Sandy himself now think about a possible remake? While he has yet to seriously map out a design, he currently seems drawn to one particular and surprising hardware platform.

"Wii is the most exciting thing happening at the moment because it avoids being hyper concerned with polygons per second – it's all about play," he says. "*Ant Attack 2* would have to be Wii-compatible, because of the controller. I'd imagine throwing a rope up a wall to escape by using the controller."

Given that kind of endorsement, you'd expect Nintendo to be beating down his door any day soon but there are other factors to consider, too. The right balance between reverence and innovation, for instance.

"You have to be careful not to get too caught up with the past," Sandy explains. "Do what Russell Davies did – throw away the old Doctors but keep the spirit. However, in the sequel the story should move on and there are a number of directions it might take. For instance, what was that pyramid right in the centre of the city where the ants came from… Is it a way into the ants' world… a spaceship? I'd like to look into all that."

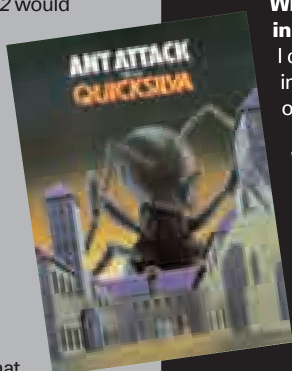
Okay, so after 25 years it's not the 'coming soon' announcement we might have hoped for, but given the mess Hollywood made of *The Italian Job* and *The Wicker Man*, perhaps that's no bad thing. Maybe *Ant Attack* should be left as it is – a glorious and unspoiled one-hit wonder. Or perhaps, if the games industry wants to move away from today's production line approach to development, it should rediscover how great, original games used to be made – by asking the guys who actually made them. Guys like Sandy White.

"We've lost the freedom to do whatever we like," Sandy concludes. "Titles cost millions today, you can't sit down and take risks, there's half a dozen bean counters looking over your shoulder and they can't guarantee it'll be a hit either… The guy in the corner trying to be inventive is more of an irritation than an asset."

Bean counters versus the ants? Sounds like a plot that we can all rally behind…

Q&A WITH DAVID ROWE

Retro Gamer found time to catch up with artist David Rowe, the creator of *Ant Attack*'s fantastically abstract cover…



When did you become interested in art?
I can't remember a time that I wasn't interested. I loved Marvel comics and often copied the content.

What styles do you favour?
I don't favour any style in particular. I like the wow factor whether it's in the form of a brilliantly executed, photorealistic air-brushed illustration or a quick charcoal sketch that describes light falling on a figure. Sketches by Rembrandt or Singer Sargent are good examples.

How did you get the *Ant Attack* gig?
During the early-Eighties I did a lot of cover art. Quicksilva used three artists regularly, Rich Shenfield, Steinar Lund and me. It must have been my turn the day they commissioned *Ant Attack*.

Did you see the game first, or was it a case of drawing something to spec?
I always discussed the covers with the people at Quicksilva first. I might go away and work up a few sketches and explore the best way forward. They gave me a cassette of the game code and I went away and played it on my Spectrum.

Why do you think the image remains popular with games?





I had no idea that it was. Maybe some of the atmosphere of the time rubbed off on it. They were heady days, everyone knew that we were at the start of something huge. Nobody knew where it was heading, but we knew it was going to be amazing. This enthusiasm led me to buy a microscope so that I could draw ants from life. I blew a third of the budget for the painting on it, but it didn't seem to matter.

Aside from *Populous* what other covers have you created for videogames and what's your favourite?
I did a lot of covers for games, magazines, books and the Children's ITV programme *Knightmare*. I worked for EA, Psygnosis, Melbourne House, Millenium among others.

It's hard to pick a favourite. I liked doing *Fred* for Quicksilva. It was a spoof of *Indiana Jones* and the hero was modelled on Rod Cousens, now COO of Codemasters. *The Chess Player* also has fond associations. It was my first game cover. Everything was drawn unaided.

What are you doing now?
I am CEO of Broadsword Interactive in Aberystwyth. We have a dedicated team of talented coders and artists. We are just completing *PopStar Guitar* to be published by XS Games on Wii and PS2.

THE CLASSIC GAME

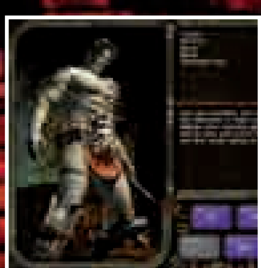
PLANESCAPE TORMENT



After a great run in the Eighties and early-Nineties, PC role-playing games practically vanished off the shelves and it seemed as though all attention was destined to be on the likes of *Doom*, *Quake* and *Duke Nukem*.

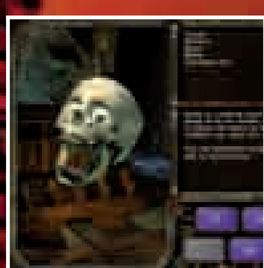
The Gold Box *Dungeons & Dragons* games had all but disappeared, *Ultima* titles were few and far between, and *Might & Magic* had long since lost its edge. Then along came relatively unknown developers Black Isle and BioWare, who unleashed *Fallout* and *Baldur's Gate* on to the world. These titles reinvigorated the stale RPG market and paved the way for Black Isle's next masterpiece, *Planescape: Torment*.

A role-playing literary work of art, *Torment* brought together an intricate and well-crafted plot, deep, memorable characters and a host of brilliantly designed locations, all of which resulted in arguably the greatest RPG of 1999. Craig Ritchie looks back on this epic adventure and reveals a handful of the reasons why this truly is a classic game.



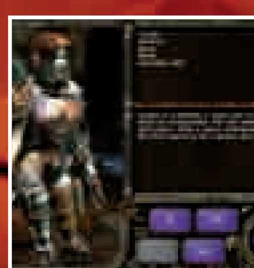
The Nameless One

Your character. Exactly where he comes from and what his true history throughout the Planes is depends in part on your actions and choices throughout the game. He starts as a fighter, but can train as either a thief or mage.



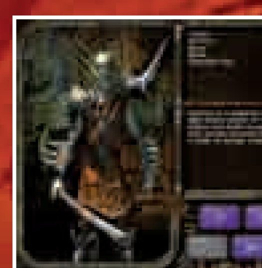
Morte

Your sidekick, Morte is a floating skull. With you from the start, Morte is your first companion, but not the most loyal. Just why do you tattoo 'Don't trust the skull' to your lower back? Also, if he's just a floating head, where does he keep all his inventory items?



Annah

An attractive tiefling (if you look past the cockney accent and tail), Annah is a handy thief and not too shabby with the fist-knives. At first reluctant to join your party, if you play your cards right you could find yourself in for a neck-biting lurve session…



Dak'kon

A solid fighter/mage, Dak'kon is a great asset. He wields a Karach blade, a weapon revered for gaining abilities along with its owner's skills. Furthermore, Dak'kon offers great insights into the arcane arts if the Nameless One becomes a magic user.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

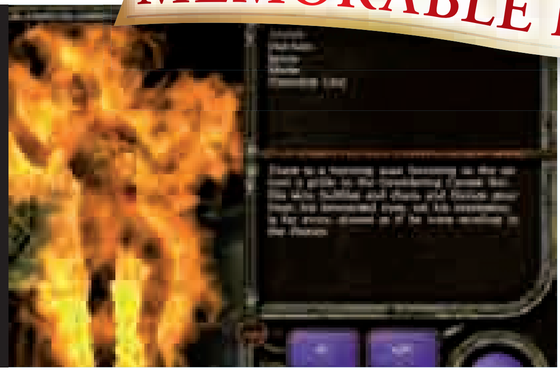
WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



Fallout + Baldur's Gate = Brilliant

Script, characters, storyline, dialogue, plot twists… are you noticing a common thread here? *Planescape: Torment* is regarded by most devoted fans as having the best writing of any RPG – ever. There are over 800,000 words in this game (to be fair, some are journal entries and quest logs) and the quality throughout is truly worthy of literary praise. Take the best of what made *Fallout* so great, add to it the new features of *Baldur's Gate*'s Infinity engine and then throw in the official *Dungeons & Dragons Planescape* campaign setting, mix in varied characters plus a wealth of sub-quests, and how could you not have a classic for RPG fans?

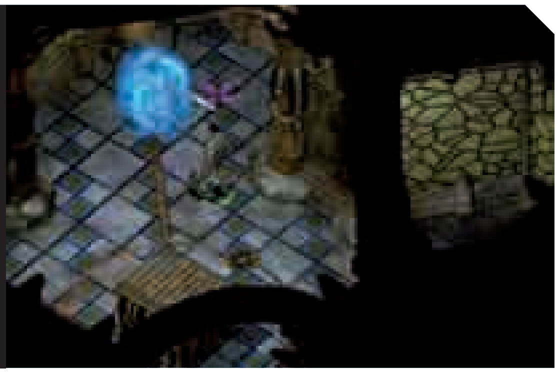
BEST CHARACTER



Light my fire

Even in a game as richly populated as *Torment*, the flaming mage Ignus stands out. Some way into the game, you're able to free his body from the Smouldering Corpse tavern, at which point he joins your party as the resident Fire Mage. Your conversations with him then reveal possibly the greatest backstory in the game, and Ignus can offer some awesome buffs and spells to your main character – at the cost of a few of your maximum hit points. He was well-scripted and genuinely added a great deal to the overall experience of the game. And besides, how many RPG characters do you know that have a pub named after them?

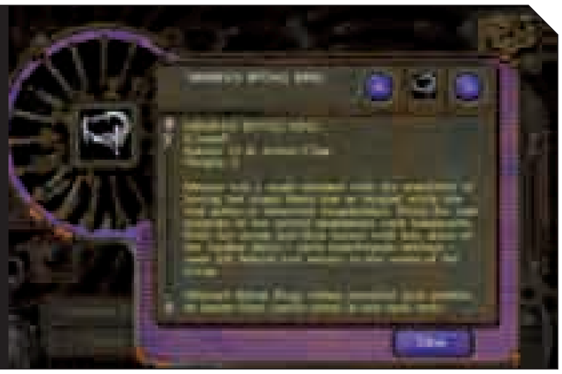
BEST TRANSPORT



Portal in a storm

Another wonderful innovation in *Planescape: Torment* was the idea of magical portals that are triggered by… well, just about anything. It could be that you were carrying a certain item in the right location, or making a specific sound in the right place, or holding your fingers 'just so' while walking under an archway, or any multitude of seemingly random events, and you would find that you had discovered a key to a portal that could whisk you off to other areas of the giant city of Sigil, maybe send you to a long-lost tomb deep underground – or to entirely different planes of existence altogether.

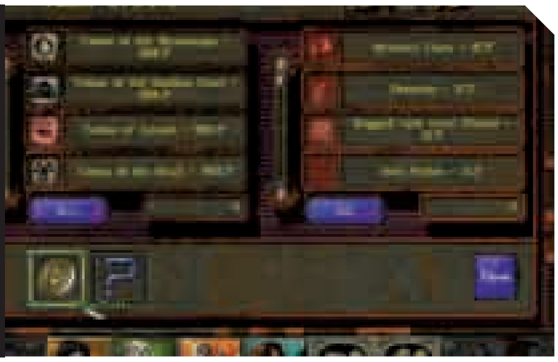
BEST ITEM



I have a bone to pick (off)

Possibly the most novel item in the game is Mempa's Biting Ring. This magical little band of silver is obtained by letting the enticingly named Marrow-friend in Ragpicker's Square take a bite out of you instead of eating the dismembered finger hanging from his neck (yes, really). Once you have said finger in your possession, you can proceed to bite off your own finger so as to stick on your newly acquired treasure, and enjoy the benefits of a permanent +2 to your armour class. The only catch is that the ring is cursed, and as a result, once attached it cannot be removed – unless the finger comes with it.

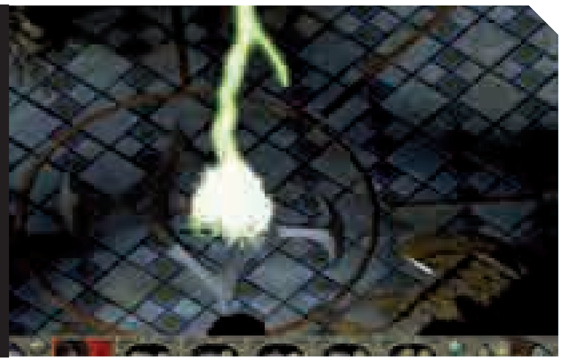
BEST RPG NOVELTY



Take this +2 Tattoo

In a departure from the RPG standards for buffing out your character, *Planescape: Torment* saw your stats, THAC0, armour class bonuses and the like affected by numerous tattoos found in the game. Fell's Tattoo Parlor was the place to go, where the Dabus – who communicate via arcane symbols above their heads – in question could sort you out with all the designs you needed. Completing certain quests, choosing the correct conversation options or finding specific items unlocked more tattoos, and by the end you could find yourself adorned by such gems as the Tattoo of Bloodletting and the Tattoo of Death-In-Life.

STANDOUT MOMENT



Death becomes you

Unlike almost every other game out there, where the avoidance of death is often the main goal, *Planescape: Torment* sees you having to die to complete some quests. One of the more tricky areas of the game, the tomb of the Nameless One, sees you struck down by magical forces when you walk over the Symbol of Torment, and then reappear elsewhere in the tomb so as to be able to collect all the necessary items for that area. This could be frustrating, as most gamers take a while to realise 'oh, I'm meant to die there', but once this was completed, it went down as one of the most memorable and unique aspects of the game.

What web sites said… ages ago

Gamespot 9.0

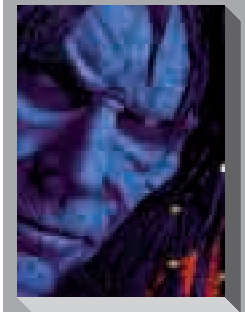
"It's clearly the best traditional computer role-playing game of the year and is bound to be an all-time favourite for many of its inevitable fans."

GameOver, 94%

"*Planescape: Torment* is yet another astounding title out the doors of the Black Isle factory, and is well worth your jink, as Planescapers would say."

What we think

Do we agree? Absolutely! The 640x480 resolution can now be enhanced thanks to a widescreen patch from www.gibberlings3.net, and PC gamers who missed this should definitely pick it up. The depth, the story, the characters and the entire world are still massively engrossing and definitely worth exploring.

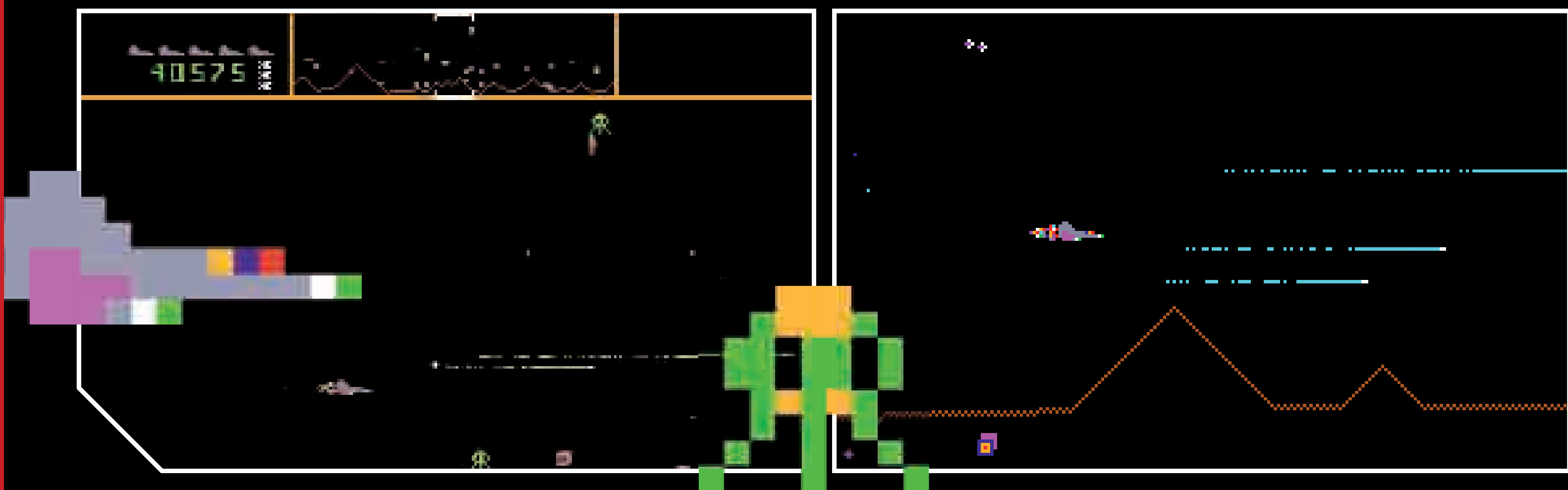


IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** PC
- **DEVELOPER:** BLACK ISLE
- **PUBLISHER:** INTERPLAY
- **RELEASED:** 1999
- **GENRE:** RPG
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+

THE MAKING OF...

DEFENDER



One of the most ruthless blasters to hit arcades, Defender is the sort of game that puts hairs on your chest (even if you're a girlie). Eugene Jarvis chats to Craig Grannell about the title that started him off, detailing Defender's rise from a wannabe Space Invaders clone to the iconic game we know today

It's hard to imagine a time when every game – no matter how simple the concept – felt fresh and new. But it once existed. Take, for example, *Defender*, designed by gaming legend Eugene Jarvis. For the uninitiated (and if you're one such person, are you sure you're reading the right magazine?), *Defender* is a wraparound side-scrolling shooter, with a small cast of deviously designed enemies, and a defend-and-rescue theme. The aim is to stop Lander aliens making off with your small crop of humans, carelessly exposing themselves on the stark planet's surface. When a Lander snags a human, it rises to the top of the screen, consumes it, becomes a crazed Mutant, and comes after you. Lose all your guys and the planet explodes, driving the point home that you're rubbish and that *Defender* is one tough cookie.

In these enlightened times, we've seen hundreds of side-scrolling shooters, but when *Defender* appeared, it was so revolutionary, so different, and had such complex controls that many assumed it would flop. But eventual strong sales and many sequels and remakes (see Stuart Campbell's The Definitive Defender in issue 29 for an overview) subsequently confirmed its legacy.

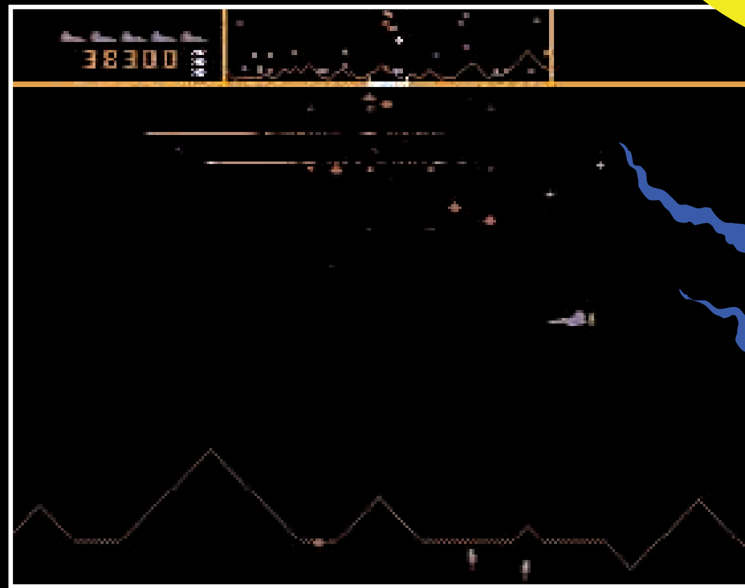
However, it's the original *Defender* that excites gamers most, with its mix of relentless, ruthless enemies, fine-tuned controls and on-a-knife-edge gameplay. What its fans perhaps don't realise is that *Defender* wasn't as original as it seemed at the time, and it evolved from an early game mash-up. "I was strongly influenced by *Space Invaders* and *Asteroids*, and thought we'd put the two together and create an even greater game," laughs designer Eugene Jarvis, amused by the naivety of his younger self. "But the practical realisation of that was a real pain in the ass…"

First, hardware considerations caused problems. "Back then, games were black and white, with plastic transparent overlays for colouring different screen elements," he says. "So we thought, 'What's the future here?' We decided four colours would be enough, but we wanted this system to be for the future, so we did 16. I mean, who would ever need more than that? Sixteen colours was way more than would ever be utilised in a game."

Resolution was boosted from the industry norm of 256x256 to 320x256, because "screens are wider than



» [Atari 2600] Lacking the grunt of its arcade parent, the flicker-fest that is the Atari 2600 version replaces the pixel-line landscape with skyscrapers.



they are tall, so this gave us a better aspect ratio and the potential for a better-looking game". Also, due to the team "not really knowing anything about hardware", the decision was made to utilise a system that moved objects in software rather than hardware – commonplace today, but rare at the time. "The computer had to write the pixels to the screen for every object, which was costly, meaning we couldn't put much on the screen," explains Eugene. This fact alone drove various design considerations for *Defender.*

We ask Eugene how *Defender*'s gameplay came to be, and he notes how games were so simple in that era that you could throw a concept up on the screen in a couple of weeks and play with it. He recalls various concepts were trialled, with the first basically being a *Space Invaders* rip-off. "You moved a little missile base, but instead of just shooting upwards, you had buttons to shoot diagonally! We thought this was going to be the greatest thing ever, but after a week or two we figured out that it wasn't much fun [laughs]."

"THE ORIGINAL DEFENDER EXCITES GAMERS MOST, WITH ITS MIX OF RUTHLESS ENEMIES, FINE-TUNED CONTROLS AND ON-A-KNIFE-EDGE GAMEPLAY"

For the next iteration, *Asteroids* was wheeled out. Unfortunately, Eugene's hardware was raster-based, hampering the graphics. "We wanted to have an *Asteroids*-type ship that would rotate, but it looked rubbish, because you'd rotate it and the pixels were all jaggy," recalls Eugene. "So we thought we'd make it round 'cause if it's round and you rotated it, nothing could go wrong."

Unfortunately, this cunning plan didn't lead to the mega-game the team hoped for. "We had this cursor that moved around and showed where you were going to shoot. We fooled around with this for a few days before figuring that it sucked," says Eugene. "We realised *Asteroids* without the vectors and spinning thing was just a bad version of *Asteroids*…"

The team also recognised that the main problem was its ideas were too derivative. After a brainstorming session, the team decided one of the coolest aspects of *Asteroids* was flying off one side of the screen and appearing on the other – the wraparound effect. "We thought you could have a game where you'd fly off the screen, but it would kind of scroll, and you'd keep flying into a bigger universe," remembers Eugene. "That might seem obvious now, but most games in that era were on one screen, and so we thought it'd be very exciting to fly into a larger world."

Eugene's game had the initial spark it needed. The decision was made to fly horizontally only, to avoid the rotational

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** WILLIAMS ELECTRONICS
- » **DEVELOPER:** WILLIAMS ELECTRONICS
- » **RELEASED:** 1980
- » **PLATFORMS:** ARCADE; LATER CONVERTED TO VARIOUS HOME SYSTEMS
- » **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £500+ FOR A WORKING CABINET



» Dull clones like *Annihilator* lack the defence and rescue components of *Defender.*

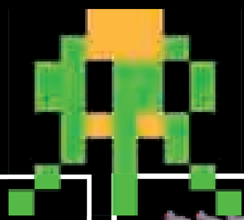


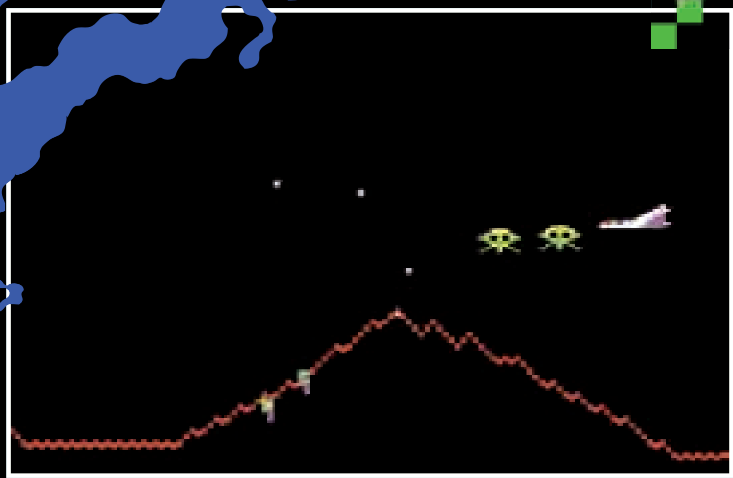
» A young Eugene Jarvis shows off his natty *Stargate* T-shirt.

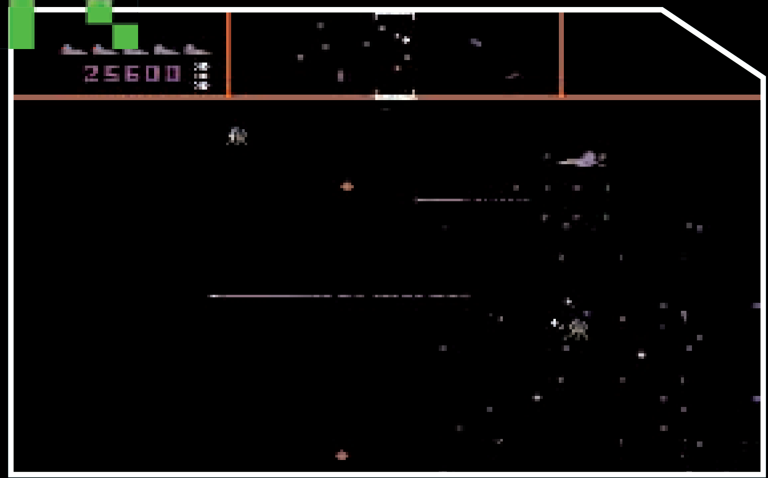


» Judging by the landscape, you may well be defending a sparse Egypt. At least there aren't any tourists.

THE MAKING OF...
DEFENDER



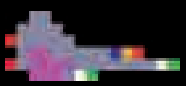




» [BBC Micro] Strangely, the best home conversion wasn't official – it was *Planetoid*, a clone for the BBC Micro, which aped the arcade game's brutality, controls and special effects.

» Pausing momentarily to admire the beautiful particle effects, the pilot suddenly realised two Mutants were about to get him.

THE CAST OF DEFENDER



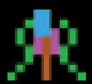
Your ship: It can fly through the ground and catch falling humans, but one hit from a hostile and it will explode.



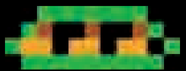
Humanoid: Ten humanoids litter the landscape, awaiting capture by Landers. They're annoyingly unarmed and blasé about the whole thing.



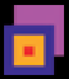
Lander: Landers teleport in and descend on humanoids. If they capture one and reach the top of the screen, they fuse to form a Mutant.



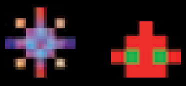
Mutant: These creatures move erratically and home in on your ship, firing projectiles.



Baiter: The speedy aliens home in on you with speed and accuracy if you hang around a level for too long.

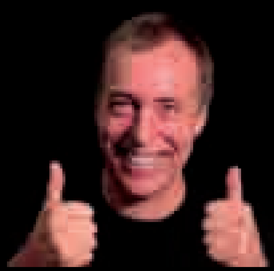


Bomber: This cube-like alien lays stationary mines that float in the air.



Pod/Swarmers: When shot, the sluggish star-like Pods burst into packs of tiny Swarmers, which fire projectiles and move in an oscillating fashion.

problems of raster graphics, and then to take *Space Invaders* and flip it on its side. "You moved your ship up and down with the *Space Invaders*-type control as you flew sideways, and that provided the impetus for the layout – the basic geometric formation of *Defender*," says Eugene. "We then threw some stuff out there. Originally, there were supposed to be *Asteroids* rocks – you'd shoot the rocks and they'd make little rocks. Horizontally scrolling *Asteroids*. And that wasn't much fun. It was like: Man, this idea of making a videogame is a real pain in the ass [laughs]."



» Eugene Jarvis proves he could happily have worked for *Zzap!64* during the Eighties.

By this point, the team had spent six months working on the project, and, in Eugene's words, it still sucked, but it was fun flying around the landscape. Eugene's friend Steve Ritchie, working at Williams on acclaimed pinball titles, suggested the player should be able to fly in both directions, an idea that was duly implemented. "But there still wasn't any real game there, and so we had to get back to the basics of what makes a cool game," says Eugene. "In that era, games were really about survival, which is certainly the most powerful human instinct."

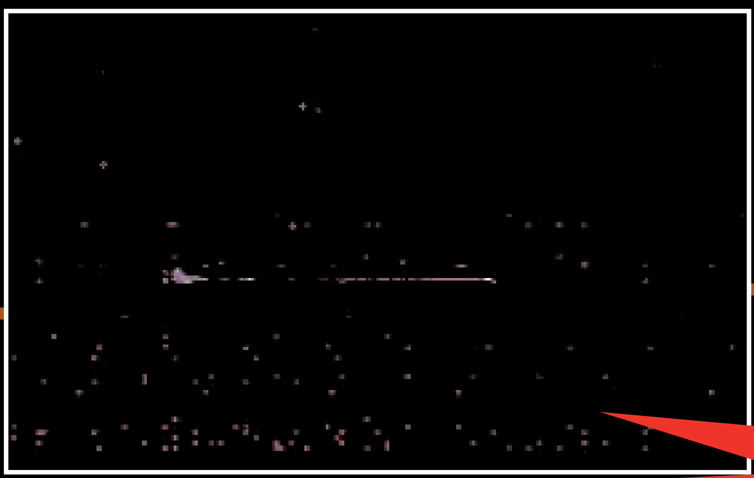
Eugene realised the player needed a threat: "You can't have a world where nothing's wrong – there's no challenge, no threat, no bad guy. In *Space Invaders*, you had the invaders – they came down, dropped bombs and killed you – they were mean. We needed some enemies…"

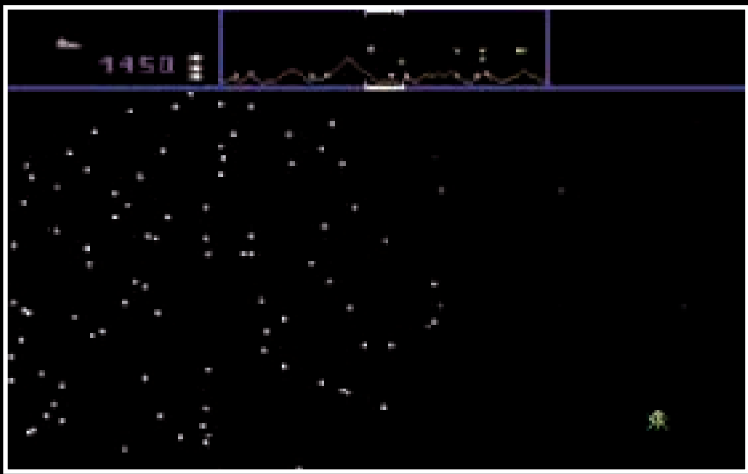
Somewhere along the line, the game received its moniker, *Defender*, and although the reasons for this are largely lost, Eugene reckons it was influenced by the idea that if you want to commit a lot of violence, you need to be justified in doing so by defending something. This way of thinking led to the team's next major breakthrough. "We knew we needed to make the game

» [C64] Even the more playable home ports, such as the depicted C64 release, lacked the arcade game's speed and effects.



» Presumably those humanoids were holding dead man's switches, because now they're gone the entire planet's blown up.





» Boom! The ship explodes into a ball of particles. Get used to seeing this happen a lot when you first play *Defender*.



» Our hero flies low to blow up a cluster of Swarmers, no doubt causing a 'friendly fire' incident at the same time.

more complex and interesting, and so we added friendlies that weren't you," says Eugene. "This added depth to the play mechanic, because you weren't just blindly shooting everything in sight, which gets monotonous – just killing, killing, killing, like manning a fire hose."

Now, there was something to defend. A planet was added, depicted as a line of pixels, due to hardware limitations – "Maybe half the real-time was dedicated to just writing this little line on the screen," says Eugene – and the Lander was introduced as the first bad guy. "All of a sudden, the game got interesting: you had a purpose, you were trying to protect these guys, and you had an enemy," remarks Eugene. "But it still wasn't that exciting."

Although modern games are regularly criticised for placing style over substance, Eugene reckons it was the visual effects implemented by Sam Dicker, an 18-year-old self-taught programmer, that suddenly lifted *Defender* to a whole new level: "A lot of the game's excitement comes from the visual effects. Sam's genius was in making these particle effects – at the time, we didn't know the term – whereby an interactive explosion was created upon shooting a bad guy."

With explosions being created algorithmically, they changed depending on where bullets hit the Landers, resulting in a visual feast of on-screen fireworks. This was in marked contrast to the more typical canned 'blam frame' most games used. "That's so boring, because no matter how and where you kill something, it's always the same," says Eugene, who likens Sam's effects to watching the surf – like waves, each explosion is unique. "It gave *Defender* an otherworldly feel. You'd be mesmerised when shooting three or four Landers at the same time, watching them blow up this way and that, and dancing around in this ballet of destruction."

On a roll, the team took things further. Landers started grabbing humans, taking them to the top of the screen, consuming them and turning into psycho Mutants that homed in on your craft with alarming speed and accuracy. Although this made things tougher for the player, the mechanic of capture added a rescue element to the game. "After a Lander captures a human, you have this chance to get around the world, shoot it and save the man," says Eugene.

This shift from shooting to defending to rescue aligned with Eugene's philosophy that the best games are those that enable you to make a comeback, rather than merely offering an "inexorable downward slope towards your inevitable death". This idea of redemption after screwing up, possibly via some heroic measure, found its way into other areas of the game. When all humans are gone, the planet explodes, leaving you surrounded by hostile Mutants, but every five rounds, the humans and planet are restored. "A player needs a chance to make a comeback," says Eugene. "Life is like that – ups and downs – and this cyclical feel makes a game more interesting, and ensures it's never hopeless. That feeling a gambler has, knowing there's always a chance of hitting the jackpot with his last dollar – that's what keeps you going."

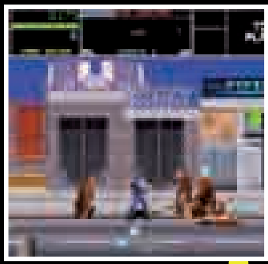
Because, in Eugene's words, "you get tired of shooting the same thing after a

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

NARC [PICTURED]
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1988

SMASH TV
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1990

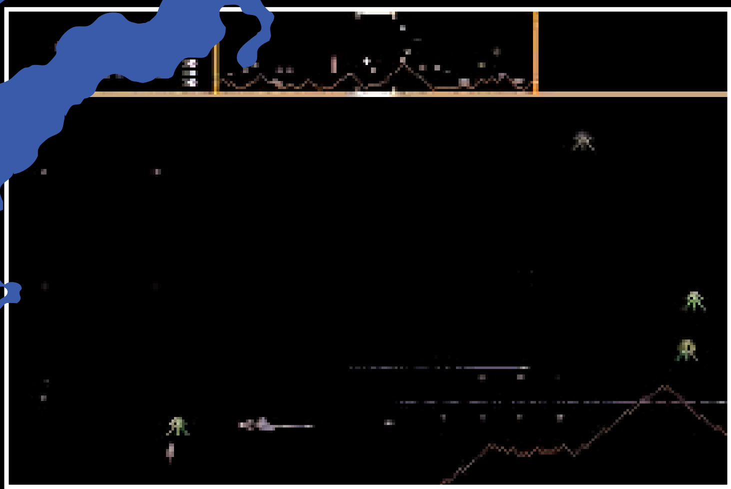
CRUIS'N USA
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1994







THE MAKING OF... DEFENDER



» Landers and Mutants converge on the weary pilot, who really wishes he'd become an accountant.



PUNISHING PLAYERS

"Luckily, I wasn't a great player, otherwise *Defender* could have been really hard," jokes Eugene about his game's notorious difficulty level. "It was part of that era to completely humiliate a player and grab their money, creating this anger where they'd want to put their foot through the glass, but then decide they were going to beat the game."

According to Eugene, the controls were the main obstacle for most: "It was so new, and no one had really done a game where you flew horizontally through multiple screens. Many thought they were playing sideways *Space Invaders*."

But Eugene admits it was perhaps too tough: "When you're designing a game, you get a warped sense of the ability of the average player. You assume because you're fairly good, you should make it harder. Games designers often err in making games too hard, but luckily in that era people saw it as a challenge to try to conquer a tough game."

while", the Landers were joined by some allies. First came the Bombers, aliens that lay stationary mines in the air. "It's interesting how the laws of physics are malleable in *Defender* – men fall to their deaths, mines float, and the ship can fly through the ground," says Eugene. "But this supports the gameplay by being flexible, instead of imposing a rigid set of mechanics that would have resulted in a sterile and restrictive game."

Subsequent enemies were designed to create new elements of play. Pods and Swarmers have different patterns of flight to Landers and come after you, rather than ground-based humans. Baiters, a hostile alien that can't be outpaced, were a reincarnation of the *Asteroids* saucer, designed to stop players lingering on a level. "They're a challenging enemy, and really great players can sit there and challenge them forever," says Eugene. "It's maddening for less-skilled players, but it added another element and created that time pressure, which was a big thing then – putting the player into a vice and slowly tightening it, ramping up the intensity."

Along with offering new gaming experiences on the screen, *Defender* provided unique controls, which often seem alien to modern gamers. Eschewing a four-way joystick, *Defender* uses a *Space Invaders*-like control to move the ship up and down, but buttons for forward thrust and reversing direction. "*Defender* was maybe the first side-scrolling shooter game, and it was based on playing *Space Invaders* with your left hand and *Asteroids* with your right," explains Eugene. "It was amazing how once you'd played *Asteroids*, you had to use the same buttons – players were programmed where thrust was on the left and fire was on the right."

Eugene compares the thinking behind *Defender*'s controls to designing cars, saying there's always a language to controls found in the past. In the same way an Eighties Ford wouldn't suddenly switch the brake and accelerator, Eugene wasn't about to make things difficult for players. However, he does admit that the original feeling was to put a four-way joystick on the left hand. "The thing is, a four-way directional controller was a new idea in arcades at the time, and we couldn't find a reliable mechanism," he says. "So we threw in a button to reverse, and the funny thing is, it actually feels better to me. When playing *Defender* on a console with a four-way joystick, it doesn't feel right. There's something about the reverse button – you can just slide across the screen, and you get more control… And it was also very cost-effective."

Although the controls and difficulty caused *Defender* to initially be dismissed as too complex, it eventually sold over sixty thousand units, and is one of a handful of truly iconic arcade games. "I think *Defender* has longevity because there's so much randomness," says Eugene. "Every spaceship has its own little brain from a sequence of random numbers and a small amount of intelligence, and so each game is different. Ships come in different patterns, in different ways and at different times, and shoot at you in different ways. This, along with the physics-driven explosions, keeps the game fresh."



» Lesson one in why letting the planet blow up is bad: hordes of screaming Mutants will kill you.





» [Game Boy Advance] The more people mess with the pure original vision for *Defender,* the worse it becomes, as this dreadful Game Boy Advance effort from 2002 confirms.



He also notes that *Defender* offers a mix of adversaries, each with their own agenda and dynamics, along with different playing modes. "When the planet blows up, everything is a Mutant and the gameplay is almost completely different," he says. "And then there's the progression of difficulty, which provides great suspense, but that sense of redemption, where if you can just survive a couple more waves, everything will be okay. Instead of a straight line of progressive difficulty, *Defender* offers a rollercoaster of emotions… Plus, I think there's maybe something about flying at breakneck speed through all this crap exploding left and right, getting a rush from the path of destruction."

As the interview draws to a close, we wonder if there's anything else Eugene would like to say about his classic game, and this leads to the subject of bugs, which he considers some of the really interesting aspects of *Defender,* notably the invisible lines that join the wraparound universe. "At that point, the enemy-seeking algorithm doesn't work. If Mutants are chasing you and you cross this invisible line, they'll start running away," he says. "Great players can exploit this, grouping Mutants, making them run away, then making them come back and blasting them all."

Other enemies have different invisible lines, and Eugene reckons this created an interesting richness that wasn't programmed. "Enemies suddenly start running away, and you go after them and they then come back after you," he says. "Players anthropomorphise their motivations. You don't want to believe they're just a bunch of random numbers, so you call them 'scared' or 'mad'. To these little robotic creatures whose brains and intelligence are ten lines of computer code, you give human characteristics and moods. Some players are like, 'Man, the Baiters are pissed off today', and on another game, you kill them and it's like, 'They were afraid – I could see the fear in their eyes'."

Another aspect of *Defender* was how it always ran on the bloody edge of running out of real-time, and a key design objective was to keep its crisp 60Hz frame rate rolling, ensuring no time-lag and responsive controls. "But if you explode a Pod with Swarmers in, the system momentarily bugs out, and the video gets highest priority," explains Eugene. "The system stops processing collisions, and you can use this to your advantage to fly right through things." He explains that seasoned players often fly round the world at breakneck speed, starving the collision detection of real-time, and appearing to get away with stuff mere mortal gamers can't.

This in many ways recalls what Eugene spoke of earlier – of creating an open system with few parameters and not controlling every eventuality. "This is why people are still interested in *Defender* – every detail wasn't scripted. When you over-script a game like a control freak, you strangle the life out of it, and it becomes finite," concludes Eugene. "There's no interaction and no life. Even if it's amazing, you've seen it all, and it's the same every time. But the beauty of gaming is constant interaction, the involvement of the player, and doing something meaningful, rather than just playing a video."

STARGATE AKA DEFENDER 2

In 1981, *Defender* got a sequel, *Stargate,* which Eugene refers to as a kind of director's cut. Brutally hard and more complex than *Defender, Stargate* split the audience. "With *Stargate,* we threw in a richer mix of enemies, things like warping, and a lot of interesting gameplay," explains Eugene. "But some preferred the purist adrenaline rush of *Defender.*"

Eugene is split on the games. "Once you've spent a year playing *Defender, Stargate* is interesting, and it's deeper," he says. "We refined the routines, so we could get more out there, and the game didn't bug out so much." However, he admits that upon returning to the games nearly 30 years later, *Defender*'s his favourite: "With *Stargate,* you need to know its idiosyncrasies – it's much more complicated. And after 28 years of braincell loss, *Defender* is kind of like 'just give me the basics.' Plus it may just be the fact that my *Stargate* is broken and my *Defender* works."

» The moment before an untimely death, with our hero surrounded by Mutants, Bombers, Pods and Swarmers.



» The radar at the top of the screen is a great way of keeping track of enemies and surviving humans.



Something Old Something New



Game Title: 1942: Joint Strike
Systems: Xbox Live Arcade, PlayStation Network
Interviewee: Rey Jimenez, associate producer, Capcom

IN A BRAND NEW FEATURE, **RETRO GAMER** LOOKS BACK AT SOME OF THE CLASSIC FRANCHISES BEING REVIVED FOR THE NEXT-GENERATION SYSTEMS. THIS MONTH, WE CHECK OUT CAPCOM'S 1942: JOINT STRIKE

Capcom's *1942* franchise has had a long and illustrious history that stretches all the way back to 1984 (see Retro Gamer 48 for the definitive lowdown on the series). With a brand new version of the original game now available on Xbox Live Arcade and the PlayStation Network, we decided to find out how the exciting new shooter came to be.

Retro Gamer: Where did the idea for a new *1942* game come from?
Rey Jimenez: The concept of making another *1942* game for download was conceived at Capcom USA. Being part of Capcom, it was just a matter of getting the project internally greenlighted and making sure that we could use the IP for a new game.

RG: How long did the game take to complete and what problems (if any) did you encounter?
RJ: *1942: Joint Strike* has been in development for just under a year, but it was a bit of a slow burn due to resources. The game development really kicked into high gear around the beginning on this year and it came a long way in a very short time.

The biggest challenge was creating a game that traditionally displayed on a screen that was taller than longer. *Joint Strike* is designed to be played in a 16:9 aspect ratio. This took a bit of learning as not many other shooters had to deal with this. You'll find that *1942: Joint Strike* uses a lot more horizontal play than previous titles.

RG: A widescreen mode was important then?
RJ: Well, we're developing on next-gen systems and they display the best on HD 16:9 screens, so we wanted to make a game that really showed this off. It just felt like the proper way to go. Since it's a new game, we should make it optimised for play on new hardware.

RG: How much input did you have from the guys at Capcom Japan?
RJ: We didn't really have much input from Japan. None of the original *1942* team members are still around, so there's no one to really consult.

RG: Is there much pressure when working on such an established franchise?
RJ: Definitely. On one hand, you want to make something new, but at the same time you don't want to stray too far from what makes a *1942* game. I think we did a great job of creating a game that looks great and has new features, but any seasoned gamer would be able to pick it up and know that it's a *1942* game.

RG: How much preparation did you do, did you play the other games in the series, and if so which one's your favourite?
RJ: I have played all of the *1942* series games and I have to say that my favourite is *194X*. This was the one used as reference the most during development. At the studio, they have a *194X* arcade cabinet at their studio.

RG: So where did the Joint Strike attack come from?
RJ: That idea was Backbone Entertainment's. One of the mandates on the project was to create a game feature that was co-op specific. We wanted something more than just two players shooting around at the same time. The Joint Strike attacks really do a great job of this because it requires players to work together on their positioning and when to attack. In co-op play, getting high scores really requires knowing when to use the Joint Strike attacks.

RG: Where do the ideas for the huge bosses come from? Was it just a case of looking back at previous games in the series?
RJ: I've always been a fan of larger-than-life bosses and this was something we definitely wanted to capture. Most of the bosses in the game though are inspired by bosses in other *1942* games.

RG: Was there anything you wanted to use that didn't make it to the final game?
RJ: I would have liked to see maybe one or two more weapon types, but we covered all the archetypical *1942* weapons, so it's not like we're missing anything.

RG: What difficulties are faced when working on Xbox Live Arcade and PlayStation Network games compared to a standard retail release?
RJ: The biggest obstacle is creating a great game with as much content as we can put in while keeping it under memory constraints. This is no longer an issue with Microsoft, but it was while *1942* was in development. To mitigate this, we just have to have proper planning with the overall scope of the project in mind.

RG: Why do you think shoot-'em-ups are proving so popular on the Xbox Live Arcade and PlayStation Network services?
RJ: Shooters are popular in general, but with normal approval processes, it's hard to release them on non-download services because it's hard to make a shooter that can justify the disc-based price point.

With the download services, it makes it possible to create a great game, that may not be grand in scope (like a shooter), and have a place that makes sense for its release.

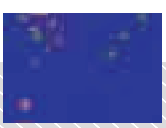
RG: Why do you think the *1942* franchise remains so popular with gamers?
RJ: Because everyone that played as far back as the NES knows *1942*. It's the type of shooter that perseveres because it's not a super niche game. I personally love hardcore Japanese shooters with tons of bullets, like *Ikaruga*, but not everyone may. World War II-era planes against similar enemies is a theme that almost any gamer can relate to.

RG: And finally, how would you like *1942: Joint Strike* to be remembered?
RJ: I'm not looking for anything too grand, such as the greatest *1942* game ever made, but I would like it to simply be remembered as a great shooter that does its pedigree justice.

1942 Timeline



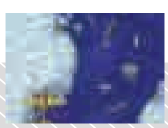
1942
Year Released: 1984
Featured Version: NES



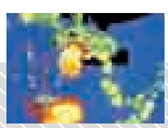
1943: THE BATTLE OF MIDWAY
Year Released: 1987
Featured Version: NES



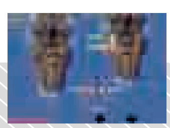
1943: KAI
Year Released: 1987
Featured version: PC-Engine



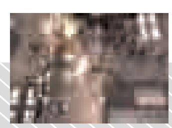
1941: COUNTER ATTACK
Year Released: 1990
Featured Version: Arcade



19XX: THE WAR AGAINST DESTINY
Year Released: 1996
Featured Version: Arcade



1944: THE LOOP MASTER
Year Released: 2000
Featured Version: Arcade



1942: JOINT STRIKE
Year Released: 2008
Featured Version: Xbox Live Arcade



» While the amount of on-screen bullets is unlikely to trouble fans of Cave's 'bullet-hell' shmups, the many bosses still manage to put up a good fight.



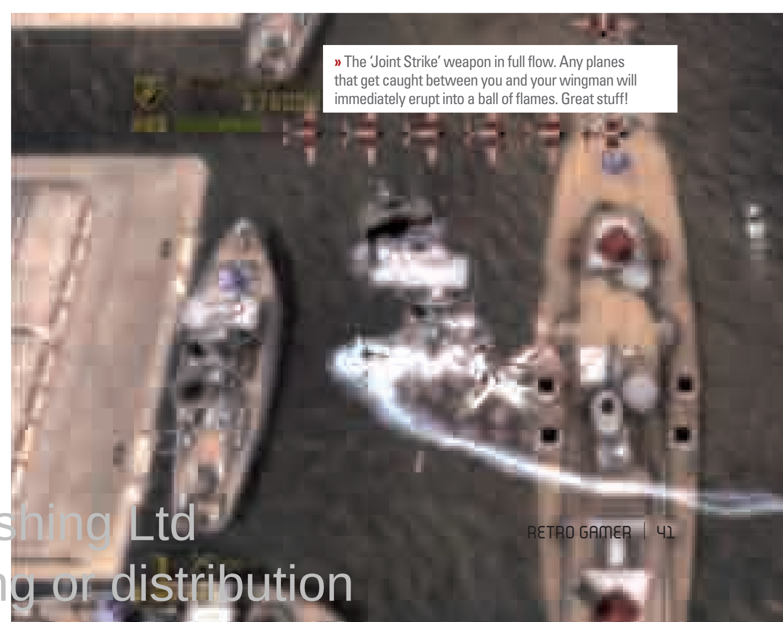
» Just a small selection of *1942: Joint Strike*'s early pre-production art. You can see that the feel of the original game was close to Backbone Entertainment's heart.











» The 'Joint Strike' weapon in full flow. Any planes that get caught between you and your wingman will immediately erupt into a ball of flames. Great stuff!

ROBO-SQUASH

A 31ST CENTURY GAME OF SQUASH



- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI
- » **RELEASED:** 1990
- » **GENRE:** SPORTS
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ATARI LYNX
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10



HISTORY

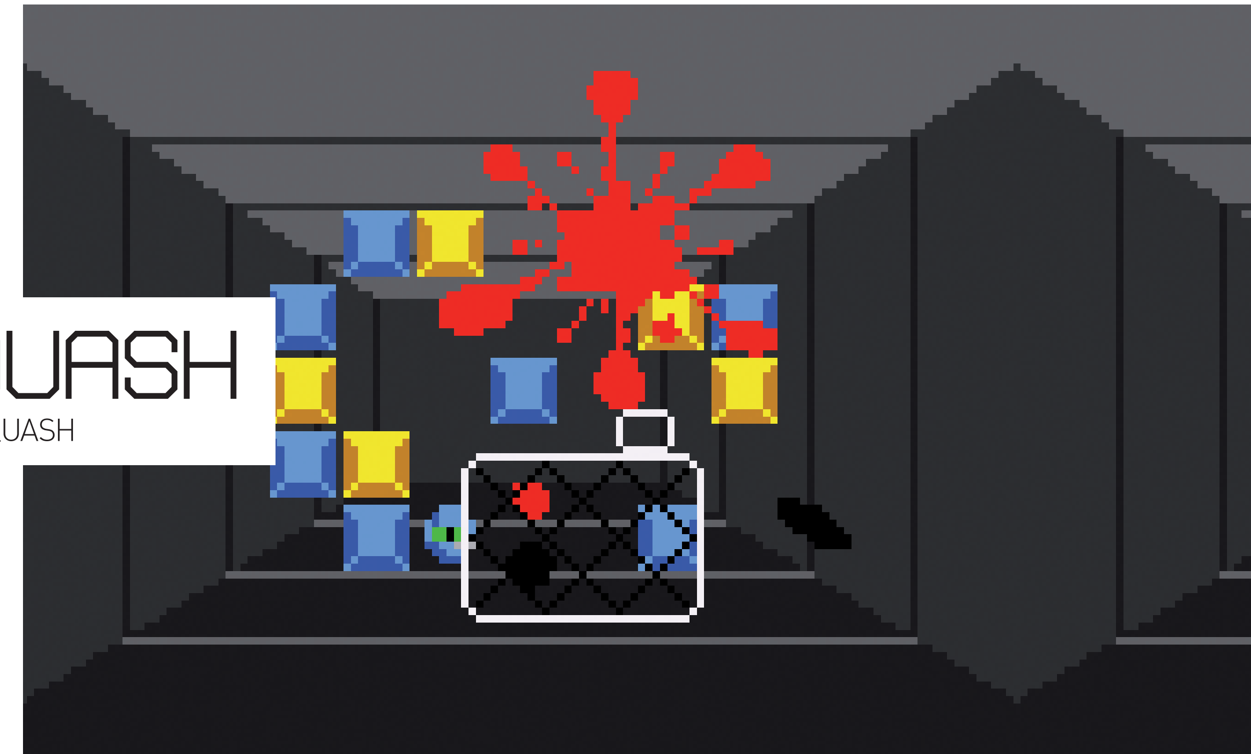
Let's face it, back when we were first discovering gaming on the fly, 'portable' was only really a term that could be applied to the Game Boy and PC-Engine GT. The Atari Lynx – although a fantastic handheld home to some sublime arcade ports – looked and felt as cumbersome as Michael Knight's steering wheel. However, the machine still swanked some of the finest titles ever made to remedy short, sharp gameplay urges.

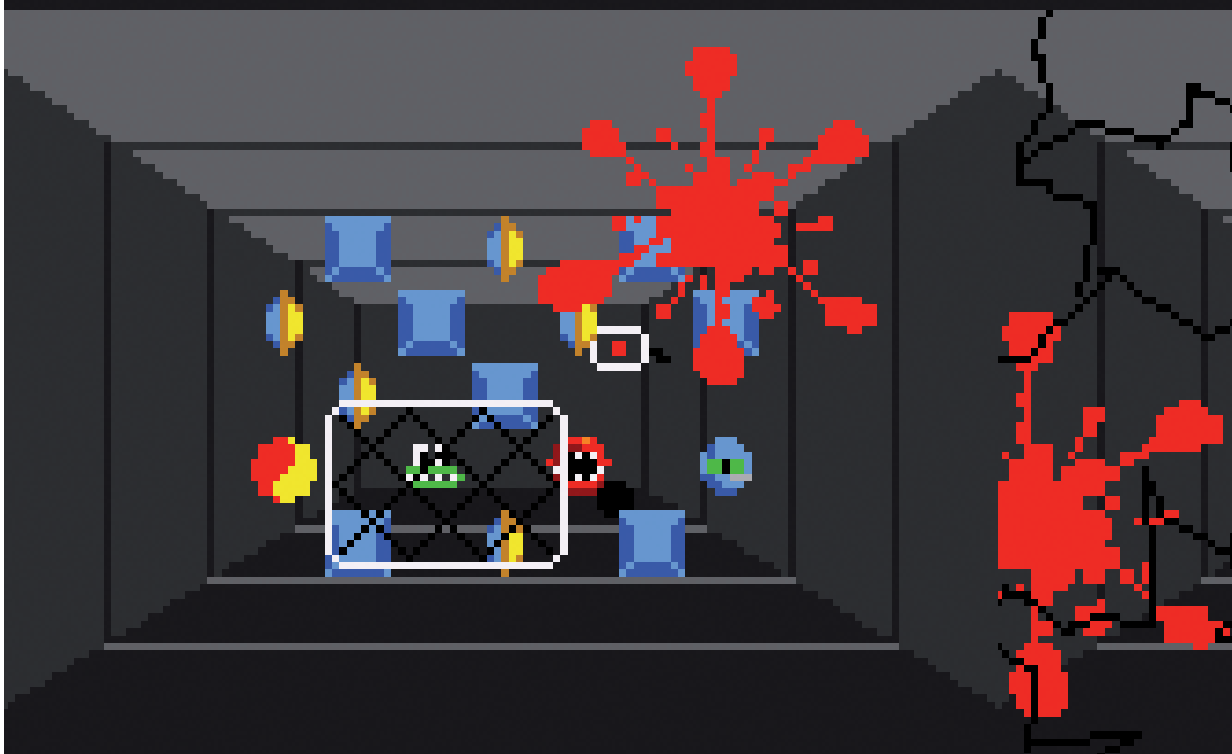
While *Robo-Squash* touts itself as a futuristic game of squash, in reality, the sport depicted actually plays out like a cross between *Shufflepuck* and *Breakout*. Set in the 31st Century, the President of the World has suddenly died. His death has somehow ignited a global conflict between two warring factions. And with "conventional warfare of the uncivilised past" now obsolete, everyone's decided to settle the dispute the only way they know how – with a game of squash.

Adopting the 3D first-person look of *Shufflepuck*, *Robo-Squash*'s tournament is split into 16 rounds, each comprising first-to-three-point matches. With a racquet resembling a large baking tray, it was your job – standing at one end of an anti-grav court – to repeatedly smash a red ball between you and your opponent.

Failing to return the ball would cause red paint to splatter on your screen, obscuring your view and making it difficult to spot incoming shots. This made for some frantic matches as the pressure and difficulty would mount with every lapse of concentration. Also adding variety to the matches was a cluster of destructible blocks and *Arkanoid*-style power-ups that sat in the middle of the arena. The power-ups varied from letting you blast fireballs to clear the tiles to an all-seeing eye that would show you the ball's direction.

If you're the owner of a Lynx and stumble across a copy of the game going for pennies, you could do far worse than pick it up. It might not look or sound anything special but *Robo-Squash* certainly holds a lot of pick-up-and-play charm. Squash it isn't, but fun it most certainly is.










GAME & WATCH MULTI SCREEN
BLACK JACK
GAME & WATCH PANORAMA SCREEN
TROPICAL FISH
TF-104
GAME & WATCH FIRE RC-04
GAME & WATCH VERMIN MT-03
GAME & WATCH HELMET
MARIO BROS.
GAME & WATCH GOLD
LION
Nintendo

GAME & WATCH



AT THE DAWN OF THE EIGHTIES NINTENDO WAS ONLY JUST STARTING TO EXPLORE THE INDUSTRY IT WOULD EVENTUALLY DOMINATE. LONG BEFORE THE NES, MARIO, AND ZELDA THERE WAS THE GAME & WATCH – THE SERIES OF HANDHELD TITLES THAT WOULD ULTIMATELY SIRE THE ALL-CONQUERING GAME BOY. DAMIEN MCFERRAN EXPLORES THE HISTORY OF POCKET-SIZE GAMING



Year released: 1980 - 1991

Original price: Approx $30

Buy it now for: £5+ (depending on model)

Why the Game & Watch range was great… The range offered true portability for the first time in the history of the videogame industry. The units were small, durable and the cell batteries lasted for ages before they needed to be replaced. Forced to work within the confines of the crude LCD technology, Nintendo succeeded in crafting some truly mesmerising gaming experiences, the vast majority of which stand up to scrutiny even by today's standards

When you look back on the history of videogames it's not uncommon to discover amusing anecdotes regarding defining moments in the industry. For example, rumour has it that Namco's *Pac-Man* was conceived when the game's creator Toru Iwatani glanced at a pizza with one slice missing, and there's an equally famous tale that suggests that Nintendo's renowned Mario was named after the landlord of the company's American offices, who happened to bear an uncanny resemblance to the Italian plumber. Whether or not these stories are actually true is a moot point but it's impossible to deny that they lend our hobby a sense of wonderment and it's remarkable to think that these toweringly popular ideas can be born from such humble beginnings.

The genesis of Nintendo's Game & Watch series is recounted in an equally whimsical tale. According to legend, Nintendo engineer Gunpei Yokoi came up with the concept after observing a bored Japanese salary man absent-mindedly fingering his pocket calculator while travelling to work. If the story is true then this seemingly innocuous encounter ultimately gave birth to portable videogaming as we know it today. Yokoi was tragically killed in a roadside incident in 1997 and although he would gain worldwide fame and adoration as the creator of the Game Boy, many view his earlier LCD legacy with the most fondness.

Yokoi started working at Nintendo in 1965, assuming the modest role of an assembly line engineer. The Nintendo of that era was a very different beast to the one that we know today; the main focus of its business was 'Hanafuda' playing cards. According to yet another of those irresistible yarns, Yokoi created an extendable arm in order to amuse himself during the long working hours and this device happened to catch the eye of company president Hiroshi Yamauchi, who was inspecting the factory at the time. Yamauchi was on the lookout for a product that could turn around Nintendo's fortunes; the playing card market had slumped badly in the mid-Sixties and the president had tried all manner of different tactics to turn a profit.

Yamauchi was instantly intrigued and tasked the young Yokoi with turning his extendable arm into a bestselling product. It was a risky move that was by no means guaranteed to succeed, but the re-christened 'Ultrahand' proved to be a runaway success, shifting more than 1.2 million units worldwide and would prove to be the first in a long line of popular toys to spring from the mind of Nintendo's new star employee. These novel creations would eventually earn Yokoi his very own department within the company, known as Research and Development 1 Group.

Towards the end of the Seventies, Nintendo started to disregard toys in favour of videogames and it was during this time that Yokoi had his aforementioned chance meeting with the bored businessman and his calculator. It was ideal timing; LCD technology was cheap and videogames were big business. However, up to this point quality gaming was restricted to either the arcade or the home. Several companies had already produced portable games, but they were usually rudimentary LED-based units with uninspiring gameplay and were too bulky to be deemed truly mobile. Yokoi watched the efforts of companies like Mattel and Tomy with interest; he had his own ideas for the portable gaming industry.

INSTANT EXPERT

The official mascot of the range is Mr Game & Watch, who famously appeared in *Super Smash Bros Brawl* on the Wii.

Sixty G&W games were released in total, although only 59 of those were ever on sale to the public – the 60th game was limited to 10,000 units and given away free as a prize.

The Silver game *Helmet* was renamed *Headache* in the UK because distributor CGL believed people would be offended by the sexual connotation of the original title.

Micro Vs Boxing was re-branded as *Punch Out!* in America to tie-in with the popular arcade game.

Game & Watch titles make cameo appearances in the *WarioWare* series.

In the late-Nineties several classic Game & Watch titles were re-released as part of the Mini Classics key ring range.

Some Game & Watch titles included battery cover stickers which could be applied to prevent babies from removing the battery cover and swallowing the batteries contained within.

Some Spitball Sparkey units were produced with white casing as opposed to the usual silver – understandably, these are worth a few bob these days.

The game Egg is identical to *Mickey Mouse* in terms of gameplay – it's rumoured that it was produced for release in territories where Nintendo's licensing deal with Disney didn't exist.

Just like regular games, some of the Game & Watch titles have cheat codes that allow you to start on later levels.

It was during the development of the Game & Watch that Yokoi laid down principles of hardware design that would echo through Nintendo's history right up to the present day, dubbing it 'Lateral Thinking of Withered Technology'. Freelance journalist and all-round Yokoi admirer Lara Crigger explains: "Essentially, Lateral Thinking of Withered Technology boils down to using mature technology in novel or radical applications. At the time of the invention of the Game & Watch, LCD technology was everywhere. It was a well-understood process and because prices for individual components had dropped so much, integrating LCD into a product was relatively inexpensive. Some people at Nintendo wanted to use fancier technology in the Game & Watch, technology that would have reduced battery life and raised costs, but Yokoi insisted that affordability was key and that the player cared more about fun gameplay over flashy technology." Yokoi would later apply this philosophy to the production of the Game Boy, and Nintendo has taken a similar stance with recent hits such as the DS and Wii.

Yokoi faced a tricky conundrum when it came to deciding upon the best interface for his new product. He quickly decided that a conventional joystick would impede on the Game & Watch's portability, so he began looking for solutions that would take up less space. Many of the early machines simply possessed a couple of buttons with which to control the game, usually corresponding to simple actions such as moving left and right or jumping, but 1982's *Donkey Kong Jr* changed all that. Although it was actually four buttons arranged in a cross shape, with each one corresponding to up, down, left and right, it would later evolve into what we now know as the direction pad, or 'D-pad' for short. This was a development of truly seismic proportions, as Crigger acknowledges: "The entire portable games industry wouldn't exist if it weren't for the invention of the D-pad. It was that first, necessary invention that made all portable gaming devices possible. It comes down to basic ergonomics; the D-pad eliminates the need for a joystick, thus streamlining the controller interface and facilitating portability. A controller with a D-pad simply takes up less physical space." Compared to other methods of control available at the time, this new interface presented undeniable advantages. "The D-pad is a more intuitive method of controlling gameplay, compared to the alternatives," continues Crigger. "Look at a joystick: to manipulate it, you have to use the sides of your thumbs and fingers – or in some cases, your palm or whole hand. That takes more manual effort than just pushing buttons with a thumb tip."

There was also an element of convergence with this new range of handhelds. Although it seems like a trifling addition in today's technologically advanced world, the inclusion of a digital clock in each game (therefore giving rise to the name 'Game & Watch') was a major selling point back in the early-Eighties. Although LCD watches were commonly available they were outside the reach of most children, so the Game & Watch was a useful device as well as a source of entertainment. A handy alarm feature was also available – possibly to wake up the owner after a particularly heavy night of LCD-gaming.

Arguably the most vital piece of the hardware puzzle was the choice of power source that would bring these tiny games to life. Yokoi opted for 'button cell' batteries, previously seen in digital watches and calculators. Not only were these cheap to replace, they were also small and therefore fitted snugly within the machines without breaking the sleek, straight lines of the casing or adding any additional weight that might hinder portability. Yokoi's desire to ensure his products would be inexpensive to run and not require a constant supply of fresh batteries played a vital part in ensuring the success of the range – a fact he was sure to remember when he came to create the Game Boy almost a decade later.

But there was much more to the appeal of the Game & Watch range than just mere interface design and long-lasting power. Because LCD technology granted the developers a very limited amount of on-screen real estate in which to place their action-packed gaming experiences, the games themselves tended to be extremely focused. "There was little room for design screw-ups," says Crigger. "If the game mechanic wasn't simple enough, or addictive enough, then the game failed. It couldn't hide behind flashy FMVs or intricate storylines. It was just player and mechanic, and that's it." The experiences offered by the Game & Watch may seem primitive by today's standards, but that very same simplicity was a major factor in the ultimate success of the lineage and it's a testament to the concept that the games are still eminently playable even today. "They're appealing for the very same reason that *Tetris* will never really die: simplicity is addictive," comments Crigger. "People love activities that are easy to learn, but hard to master."

The first Game & Watch title was the simplistic *Ball*. Released in 1980 this endearingly basic game showed only faint glimmers of the kind of depth later Game & Watch titles would possess; the screen was completely blank, the gameplay was unsophisticated and the LCD characters somewhat crude – clearly a case of the developer finding its feet with new technology. Sales weren't astonishing but the



» By the time the Game & Watch Tabletop series appeared, Nintendo was being a bit more hands-on with worldwide distribution, as this advert proves.



» Light-hearted adverts such as these appeared in UK comics like *Eagle*.



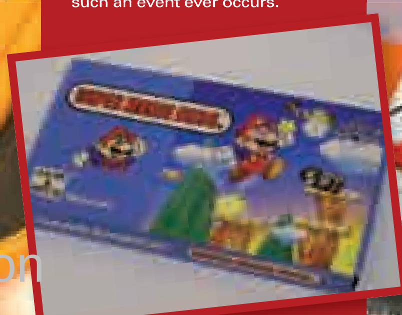
» The man himself – Gunpei Yokoi created the Game Boy, but sadly died in 1997.



» LCD will never die: Mr Game & Watch kicking arse in *Super Smash Bros Brawl*.

COUNTERFEIT FIX

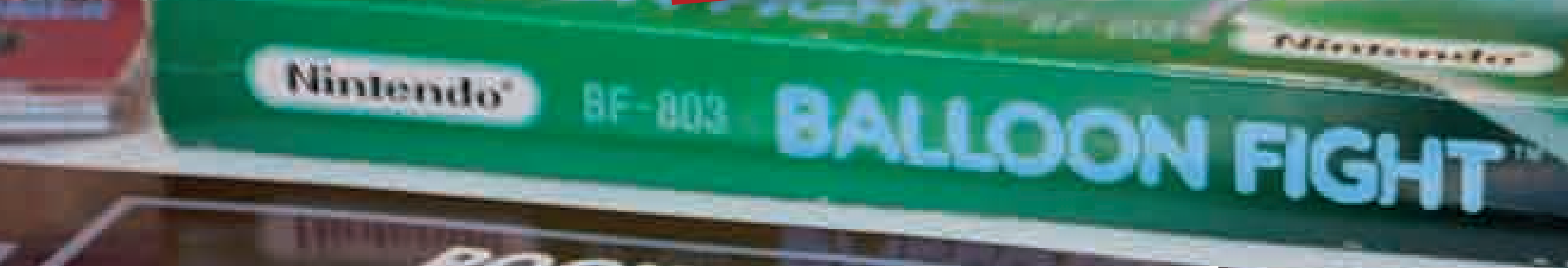
As is the case when any product becomes valuable, the Game & Watch market is highly susceptible to fakes. "In the last few months, we've seen a lot of counterfeit items appearing," reveals Cole. "It's mostly boxes and instructions – having a box, especially one in good condition, adds greatly to a game's value." These high-quality reproductions of original packaging have caused a serious headache for dedicated collectors. "Most collectors look for mint items and have paid great amounts of money to acquire them," explains Panayiotakis. "Finding original Game & Watch boxes intact isn't an easy task, but if someone started selling perfect counterfeit boxes or games, your collection would be instantly worth one twentieth of what you had paid for it because the market would be flooded with perfect items." However, at this stage the problem is isolated to boxes and instructions. "To my knowledge, nobody has been able to produce a fake game successfully – yet," says Cole. If fake machines were to appear, Panayiotakis is in no doubt as to what effect it would have on the collecting community. "Perfect counterfeit items would make the task of collecting authentic games very difficult," he says. "I don't think there would be any point in collecting the games after that, if such an event ever occurs."





FROM A TO B

Mindful that each Game & Watch could only offer one game due to the limiting nature of the LCD display, Nintendo decided to include two different difficulty settings for each machine, thereby increasing the long-term appeal of each title. Known as 'Game A' and 'Game B', the player had to press the corresponding button before starting play to decide which challenge they wished to face. Game B was usually faster and more demanding, but there were exceptions – *Flagman*, for example, had two different games and the 'B' variant is generally seen as the more enjoyable. Multi Screen release *Squish* is another and in *Judge*, Game B is actually a two-player version of 'A'. Although it was a neat concept and added hours of playtime to each release, not all titles carried this feature – *Climber* and *Super Mario Bros* do not possess Game B options.



GAME BOY GALLERY

Should splashing out loads of cash on original Game & Watches not appeal to you then you can always buy one of the excellent compilation packages that were released for Nintendo's Game Boy machines. The series debuted in 1994 (in Europe and Australia) with *Game Boy Gallery*. The sequel, *Game & Watch Gallery*, followed in 1997 and was granted a global release. The third and fourth games were released on the Game Boy Color in 1998 and 1999 respectively, and a Game Boy Advance instalment hit shelves in 2002. In many cases the games in these collections were visually upgraded variants of the originals. More recently Nintendo has released the *Game & Watch Collection* for the DS (only to members of Japan's Club Nintendo service, but copies are easy to find on eBay), which replicates three Multi Screen titles – *Oil Panic, Green House* and *Donkey Kong*. Dig out **RG** 30 for our review.



COMMUNITY GAME & WATCH SITES TO WATCH

Mike's Nintendo Game & Watch Forum

www.mpanayiotakis.proboards19.com

Mike Panayiotakis's excellent forum is a vibrant hub of Game & Watch activity and is the ideal place to learn about the complexities of starting a collection. A must-have resource for prospective fans.



Andy Cole's Game & Watch Collection

http://homepage.ntlworld.com/gameandwatch/gw.htm

Cole's G&W page is one of the net's oldest and forms part of a wider site that charts his entire videogame collection. The best part is the GIF animations showing sections of each game.



Parachuter

http://p-edge.nl/parachuter/

Martin Van Spanje's site is attractive and brilliantly designed – which is no surprise when you consider his current job is a system developer. There are loads of high-quality images to be found here, as well as some Game & Watch ring tones, recorded by Van Spanje himself.



Game & Watch.com

www.gameandwatch.com

Another well-realised site devoted to Nintendo's Game & Watch, it recently celebrated its fifth birthday. It's easy to see why the site has been around for so long – it has bags of content and great design. Worth a visit should you crave more knowledge on the G&W series.





game seemed to strike a chord with consumers and this was enough to persuade Nintendo that it was worth creating further titles. *Ball* marked the first release of the 'Silver' series of Game & Watch titles, so called because of the colour of the metallic faceplate. The next step was the 'Gold' series, which was fundamentally the same machine but with a different faceplate and a smattering of static colour on screen to make the games seem a little more vibrant. This range spawned a mere three titles before it was superseded by the 'Wide Screen' variant in mid-1981. As the name suggests, the display was a whopping 30 per cent larger than the one seen in the Silver and Gold range.

The limitations of the LCD display meant that Nintendo was always looking for ways to innovate, and the next logical step was to add another screen to double the amount of gameplay each title could potentially offer. The Multi Screen series kicked off with *Oil Panic* in 1982, but it was the release of *Donkey Kong* that really cemented the success of the range. Easily the biggest selling of all the Game & Watch titles up to that point, *Donkey Kong* was a startlingly faithful representation of the arcade smash hit. Iconic in design, the Multi Screen range would influence future Nintendo design choices. "It's no secret that the Nintendo DS was based on the original Multi Screen Game & Watch design and that just shows how far ahead of its time this idea was," comments hardcore collector Mike Panayiotakis.

Released in 1983, the Tabletop series was something of a departure for the norm. It sacrificed portability for more impressive colour visuals and ran off bulky 'C' batteries. Sales of this machine were steady but nowhere near as impressive as its Wide Screen and Multi Screen cousins, and therefore only four Tabletop titles were ever produced. A refinement of the technology resulted in the more mobile 'Panorama' series a few months later, which used a foldout mirror to enhance the vacuum fluorescent display. Nintendo's seemingly insatiable desire for colour gaming culminated in 1984's ill-advised 'Supercolor' range, which was in fact just a standard LCD display with a colour overlay. Only two games were ever produced, making this the least successful entry in the Game & Watch canon. Sensing that gaming was also a social pastime, Nintendo decided to publish the 'Micro Vs' series in the same year, which offered simultaneous two-player action thanks to a pair of small detachable controllers.

Also in 1984, the final hardware revision was released in the shape of the legendary 'Crystal Screen' machines. These were more traditional games in keeping with the Wide Screen style, but they possessed a transparent LCD display. Sadly these screens were highly susceptible to damage. Marketed as a luxury item, the range didn't quite achieve the same kind of fame as the more traditional Wide Screen games, which by this point had been relaunched under the snappy title of 'New Wide Screen'.

Although it's strange to think it now, Nintendo didn't really command much of a presence outside Japan at the time, so worldwide distribution of early Game & Watch machines was handled by other companies. These included Mega (USA), CGL (UK), Ji21 (France), Videopoche (Belgium) and Futuretronics (Australia). Many of these firms would re-package the devices and in some cases remove the Nintendo logo altogether, instead replacing it with their own.

By the mid-Eighties Nintendo had released the NES home console and the Game & Watch range took a back-seat role. As the decade drew to a close the seemingly vast reserves of innovation began to run dry, but it was ultimately Yokoi himself that would deal the deathblow to his beloved pocket-sized offspring. *Zelda*, the penultimate release in the range, hit shelves in 1989 – the same year as Yokoi's newest pet project: the Game Boy. It was instantly obvious that the writing was on the wall for the videogame and clock combo. The very last entry in the series was a

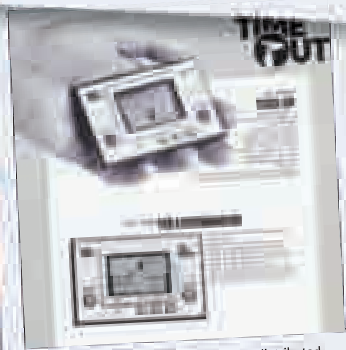




» Believe it or not, but these are actual erasers of various Game & Watch titles. Perfectly formed, it's almost a shame to actually use them for their actual purpose.

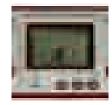


» Yokoi's Ultrahand – the toy that established an empire.



» Time Out was another company that distributed Game & Watch machines in the US – note the lack of Nintendo branding on the machines.

DIFFERENT VERSIONS



Silver Range
The one that started it all. The Silver range consisted of five different titles and lacked the colourful screen overlays that would be seen in later titles. Five games were produced in low quantities and as a result they're pretty rare these days.



Multi Screen
Pre-dating the DS by over 20 years, the Multi Screen effectively gave twice as much action by adding an additional LCD display. Because the game could be closed when not in use, it made it even more durable. A smaller version that opened sideways was also released.



Tabletop
Bulky, power-hungry and practically un-portable, the Tabletop range was something of a backwards step, recalling memories of the unwieldy electronic games of the late-Seventies. Unsurprisingly, the range didn't sell as well as the traditional G&W machines, although in terms of gameplay these are still wonderful machines to own.



Micro Vs
Providing much-needed multiplayer action, the Micro Vs range featured two small joypads that could be stored within the system when not in use. The thin screens were less welcome, however, and the series was not as successful as might have been expected.

loving homage to the game that started it all – 1991's *Mario The Juggler* recycled the gameplay from *Ball* but showcased gorgeous screen artwork. It was the end of an era, but with the new-fangled Nintendo wooing gamers the world over, few seemed to mourn its passing.

Given the durable nature of the Game & Watch range, the appealing design of the casing and the desirable Nintendo branding, it's little surprise that a truly hardcore collecting scene has risen up over the past few years. The reasons for this differ depending on which collector you happen to speak with. "For most of today's collectors, it's simply nostalgia," comments British Game & Watch fanatic Andy Cole. "People now find themselves with the resources to buy the games they lusted after in their childhood, which their meagre pocket money couldn't buy them." Others do it more for the love of the brand, such as Dutch collector Martin Van Spanje. "I have always loved Nintendo games and the Game & Watch series are basically where it all started for that company," he says. "I want to see them all, and find out how Nintendo made progress."

Whatever the reason, amassing all 60 of these unique devices isn't an easy (or cheap) task.

"Even though many of the games can be found for a fiver, you need lots of cash if you want all 60 of them," explains Van Spanje. "My collection has already cost me around 3,600 euros, and I'm still missing four of the more expensive games. Also, I don't collect mint condition games and I don't care about the packaging and user manuals. If you want all of that as well, you need to at least double your piggy bank." Indeed, boxed specimens in pristine condition can fetch prices well into triple figures and the elusive '60th' game – a special edition of *Super Mario Bros* produced in 1987 – is very hard to locate. "This is the Holy Grail of Game & Watches and remained almost completely unknown in collector's circles for over a decade," explains Cole. "It was produced as a prize for a competition for owners of a NES F1 racing game. Ten thousand were given away in Japan only, making this by far the rarest Game & Watch title. Only in the early 21st Century, when collectors in Japan spread the word, did this game become widely recognised. Because of its rarity, its value is higher than that of any other game in the range – expect to pay about £300 just for an unboxed specimen."

Another aspect that makes the range so appealing today is the durability of the games themselves. "As can be seen by the number appearing in auctions and in collections, they are still going strong, thanks mostly to their extremely simple electronics," comments Cole. "They are probably more reliable than a games console of today; I expect that they'll still be around long after the last PS3 is in landfill." Van Spanje expands on this: "The games were intended for kids and fit inside your pocket. If you keep them safe, they will last for ever even if you play them regularly."

Has our intrepid gang of Game & Watch experts got any advice for prospective collectors? "A potential collector should first set a target," advises Panayiotakis. "There are many things to collect and buying everything isn't an option unless you have unlimited money. Do you wish to collect boxed games? Do you wish to get special versions of the games? Do you wish to get all 60 games? You need to focus on specific items and create a list of things you wish to collect." Cole gives similar guidance: "The answer I always give to this question is to go slowly, as it's possible to get a complete collection of every title in as little as a month or two if you have the money, but where's the fun in that? Decide on a goal before you start. For example, decide if you want loose or boxed games, special or regular editions, then stick to your goal and be patient to wait for the right games to come along. My collection took me about five years to complete but I got some extremely good bargains and that is more satisfying than blowing a few grand all in one go."

Special thanks to Andy Cole for providing exclusive hardware photography for this feature and thanks also to Justyn Chan for additional images.



PERFECT TEN GAMES

Although the general quality of the 60 games released in the Game & Watch range is very high, there are obviously a handful of titles that stand out as true classics worthy of your time and money. We asked our trio of Game & Watch experts to come up with their most memorable titles…


01

DONKEY KONG JR (NEW WIDE SCREEN)

» **RELEASED:** 1982

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** CRAB GRAB

01 **The first 'New'** Wide Screen release justifiably possesses a lofty reputation among hardcore collectors. "It has the best playability ever in a Game & Watch release," states Martin Van Spanje – which is high praise indeed when you consider the high quality of most Game & Watch titles. Mike Panayiotakis is in agreement: "This is the only game I owned as a kid and it holds a special place in my heart. It has some great gameplay as well." Assuming the role of Kong's cute offspring, the basic aim is to free your captive father by unlocking the bolts on his cage. It may have crude visuals but they're surprisingly atmospheric. "While none of the Game & Watch titles are exactly realistic, I always thought that this one really made you imagine that you *were* in the jungle," says Andy Cole.

DONKEY KONG II (MULTI SCREEN)

» **RELEASED:** 1983

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** TROPICAL FISH

02 **An early Multi** Screen release, *Donkey Kong II* is technically the sequel to *Donkey Kong Jr,* with Kong's plucky offspring once again called upon to save his beloved father – only this time across two hazard-packed screens. "This is a brilliant game," says Van Spanje. "After moving all the way up the second screen you have to work your way down again to set a switch. It's a challenge to play, and fun too, every time you open the cage and free your father." Featuring some lovely case artwork and attractive screen presentation, it's little wonder that *Donkey Kong II* was a roaring success and continues to be fondly remembered by fans even today. Because it was a huge seller, second-hand units are common and cheap, so if you're looking to start a collection then this is well worth investigation.


02

SPITBALL SPARKY (SUPERCOLOR)

» **RELEASED:** 1984

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** PINBALL

03 **One of the two** releases in the ill-fated Supercolor range, *Spitball Sparky* is a *Breakout* clone at heart. While it doesn't work as well as you might hope, it remains an intriguing example of Nintendo really trying to push the remit of the Game & Watch range. "It's great because it's an attempt to create bats-'n'-balls type gameplay using crude LCD graphics," says Van Spanje. "It's not altogether successful but it is great to see Nintendo trying to work around the limitations of the LCD screen and watch the games maturing ahead of the technology." Sadly, the larger Supercolor units are a lot less portable than other machines.

MARIO THE JUGGLER (NEW WIDE SCREEN)

» **RELEASED:** 1991

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** BLACK JACK

04 **Although this was** the last Game & Watch handheld to be made, it's actually a remake of the first title in the lineage rather than a fully fledged release. The crude visuals of *Ball* are updated excellently, with Mario taking centre stage. The screen is also attractively illustrated with scenes from *Super Mario Bros.* "*Mario The Juggler* looks really nice with a colourful screen background and the game is quite addictive and musical," says Cole. The gameplay isn't as deep as you might want but it proves that the core concept of *Ball* is strong enough to remain entertaining. It's also quite collectable these days.

ZELDA (MULTI SCREEN)

» **RELEASED:** 1989

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SAFEBUSTER

05 **The penultimate Game** & Watch was released in the same year as the Game Boy and by this point it was clear that the series was on borrowed time. Nevertheless Nintendo chose to go out with a bang. "Even though it's nothing like the *Zelda* we now know, it did capture the feel of the world it was played in," says Van Spanje. "It's basically stabbing opponents with a knife, and then defeating the same old dragon over and over again, but it's a piece of *Zelda* history." Although it was a Multi Screen release, the action is confined to the lower screen, with the top display being used solely for statistics and information.


03


04


05



06



07



08

SUPER MARIO BROS (VARIOUS)

» **RELEASED:** 1986

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** RAIN SHOWER

06 **The first Game** & Watch release to feature horizontally scrolling levels, *Super Mario Bros* was incredibly advanced for its time. Although squeezing the addictive gameplay of the NES original into the primitive LCD hardware wasn't really a possibility, this is nevertheless a pretty convincing facsimile and remains one of the most entertaining titles in the range. The visuals are a little basic (this is mainly due to the scrolling levels, which use flat lines to give the impression of movement) but everything else is exceptionally polished. The special edition variant was limited to 10,000 and is very rare, but it has the same gameplay as the other versions.

BALLOON FIGHT (NEW WIDE SCREEN/ CRYSTAL SCREEN)

» **RELEASED:** 1986 (CRYSTAL), 1988 (WIDE)

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MARIO'S CEMENT FACTORY

07 **First released as** part of the coveted Crystal Screen range of Game & Watches, but eventually given a more affordable New Wide Screen outing, *Balloon Fight* is yet another painfully addictive addition to the Game & Watch line-up. Although *Balloon Fight* shares its name with the famous Nintendo arcade game, this brilliant Game & Watch is actually based on the 'Balloon Trip' mode that only appeared in the NES home console release. You play as a young chap with a jet pack and you're tasked with moving through the scrolling levels collecting balloons and avoiding traps as you go.

CLIMBER (NEW WIDE SCREEN/ CRYSTAL SCREEN)

» **RELEASED:** 1986 (CRYSTAL), 1988 (WIDE)

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SNOOPY

08 **Many collectors view** *Climber* as the 'perfect' Game & Watch release in terms of gameplay. "It's a near-perfect implementation of limited LCD graphics and manages to include multiple levels, moving platforms and end-of-level bosses," says Van Spanje. "It should still exist today as a mobile game. If not, someone should make it and re-release it." Like *Super Mario Bros*, the visuals look basic due to the scrolling levels, but *Climber* feels far more vibrant and active than most LCD titles. If you want a solid introduction to the world of Game & Watch, try this.



09

MICKEY MOUSE (WIDE SCREEN)

» **RELEASED:** 1981

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** MANHOLE

09 **It's amazing to** think this now, but many of the characters that graced the early Game & Watch titles were licensed from other companies, and Nintendo stars like Mario and Donkey Kong only got their chance to shine later. Along with Snoopy and Popeye, Disney's Mickey Mouse featured in several titles, with this Wide Screen outing probably his best. "I love playing the game and just like the look of it," says Van Spanje. The game involves catching eggs and is almost identical to another G&W release entitled *Egg*. It's believed that this other variant exists because Nintendo didn't have worldwide rights to use the *Mickey Mouse* licence. The gameplay is simple but addictive, and it is an interesting example of how Nintendo explored the weird and wonderful world of licensing in its early days.

MARIO'S BOMBS AWAY (PANORAMA)

» **RELEASED:** 1983

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** GOLDCLIFF

10 **It may be** common knowledge that Mario is a dab hand when it comes to sorting out your troublesome waterworks, but did you know that the plump Italian also has a highly decorated military career to his name? Witness *Mario's Bombs Away*, in which Mario dons his army fatigues and attempts to safely transport a succession of bombs to the enemy camp. Unsurprisingly, this dangerous activity isn't without its risks – one false move and Mario is on the wrong side of a massive explosion. "This is good fun to play and it looks good, as do all the Panorama games," says Cole. The Panorama series may not have been a huge success, but this game is certainly worth your time. Unsurprisingly, Mario seems to have disowned his wartime exploits these days – we can only guess that driving karts is less dangerous.



10

MAKING OF...



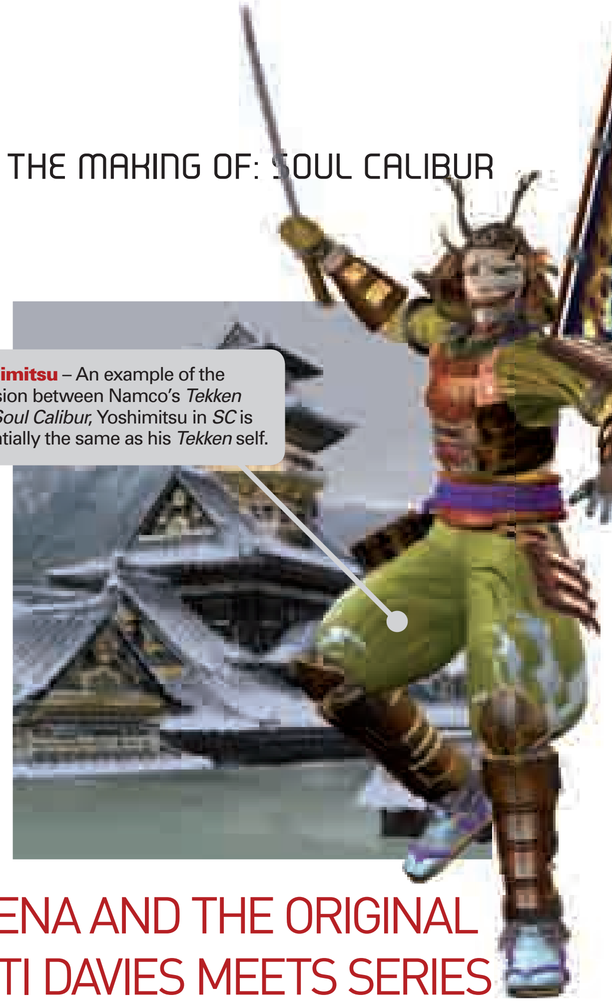
Kilik – Kilik is a strong all-rounder in possession of a staff, which he wields at great speeds and via which he is able to make long-range attacks with ease.

Edge Master – Edge Master has access to all of the weapons found in *Soul Calibur*; there's nothing he doesn't know.

Astaroth – Astaroth packs a giant axe, which is a lethal weapon when used correctly. Mastery of his attacking potential is needed to make up for his slow movement.







Yoshimitsu – An example of the collusion between Namco's *Tekken* and *Soul Calibur*, Yoshimitsu in *SC* is essentially the same as his *Tekken* self.



AS SOUL CALIBUR IV ENTERS THE NEXT-GEN ARENA AND THE ORIGINAL CALIBUR GAME WINDS UP ON XBOX LIVE, JONTI DAVIES MEETS SERIES PRODUCER HIROAKI YOTORIYAMA TO JOURNEY THROUGH THE EVOLUTION OF THE CLASSIC DREAMCAST INSTALMENT

Until the Dreamcast was released in Japan at the end of 1998, only SNK's eccentric and much-loved Neo-Geo AES console had achieved perfect parity with arcade technology, and that was limited to crossovers between the AES and its dressed-up-as-a-coin-op MVS sibling. Dreamcast, however, was something else. Sega's final home console didn't merely bring console games to the level of contemporary arcade experiences: in many cases its technology enabled developers to surpass the quality of late-Nineties coin-ops. The most obvious example of this phenomenon was Namco's *Soul Calibur*, which went from being an excellent arcade fighter to an even greater, more technologically advanced experience when pressed to GD-ROM.

But to get to the start of the *Soul Calibur* story, we first need to journey back to the series' origin: *Soul Edge*. It was *Soul Edge* (known in the UK as *Soul Blade*), which ran on the System 11 arcade board, that marked Namco's sidestep into the relatively unexplored territory of 3D weapons-based beat-'em-ups, a sub-genre that the *Soul Calibur* games would later claim as their own. The team behind *Soul Edge*, led by ever-present producer Hiroaki Yotoriyama, used the project as a means of taking baby steps into an area in which they were not fully confident of success and where the potential for a special gameplay experience had not yet become apparent. "We announced that we were working on the *Soul Edge* coin-op in 1995 and then we followed that up with a PlayStation conversion in 1996," Yotoriyama recalls. "[During 1995 and 1996], with *Soul Edge* we were just able to basically explore the possibilities for a fighting game that used weapons."

The result of the team's experimentation was a partial success. Fighters were limited to performing sidesteps so as to evade attacks, rather than using the truer eight-way movement that would be pioneered in *Soul Calibur*. *Soul Edge* did, however, establish the core group of characters that would reappear in *Soul Calibur* and its sequels, giving debuts to fighters such as Siegfried and Voldo. Above all, with its utilisation of weapons in a 3D environment, the team's initial effort presented an alternative to the then-dominant schools of *Tekken* and *Virtua Fighter*. The successful PlayStation port of *Soul Edge* also gave an early indication of Yotoriyama and team's willingness to augment its arcade-to-console conversions with additional, console-exclusive content.

Instead of opting to quickly develop a *Soul Edge 2* with better graphics and more combatants, Namco subsequently took a step back to evaluate how best to capitalise on the game's successes. Yotoriyama realised there was the possibility of taking Namco's *Soul* on a more interesting journey, and a name change was in order to reflect the game's rebirth. "After our work on *Soul Edge*," Yotoriyama explains, "we turned our attention towards developing a fighting game that featured normal weapons known the world over, which we moved into quite naturally. From that time on, Namco's beat-'em-ups were running along two lines of production – the *Tekken* line and the *Soul Edge* line – but we were combining our powers: we had mutual technology and we shared our development know-how."

The benefits of co-operation between internal teams at Namco were such that what had been the company's flagship fighting game was in danger of being upstaged, though there seems to have been more camaraderie than rivalry between the developers of *Tekken* and *Soul Calibur*. "As a result of this [mutually beneficial alliance] we were able to produce the greatest weapons-based fighting action game in the world," Yotoriyama boasts, in reference to *Soul Calibur*. And he's arguably accurate in his (self-)assessment: *Soul Calibur* was the second game to be awarded a perfect 40/40 score in *Weekly Famitsu* and it also received top marks and glowing reviews from some of the most reputable English-language publications. The Dreamcast version has aged exceptionally well and is regarded by some as the most refined game in the entire series. Plus – money talks – more than a million copies of *Soul Calibur* were sold worldwide. It was, and should still be seen as, a remarkable success.

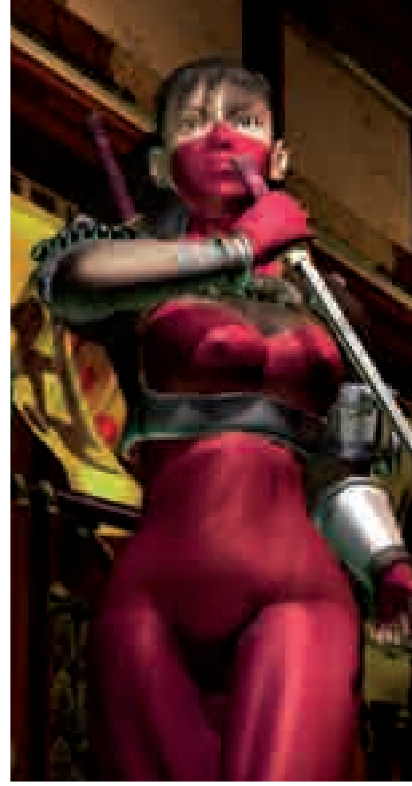
Behind the strong retail performance and the hype, *Soul Calibur* proved to be such a formidable experience principally because it was doing things differently. Obviously the use of weapons (which other developers had failed/declined to emulate in their own beat-'em-ups since the appearance of *Soul Edge*) played a big part in setting *Soul*

IN THE KNOW



- **» PUBLISHER:** NAMCO
- **» DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **» RELEASED:** 1999
- **» GENRE:** 3D WEAPONS-BASED BEAT-'EM-UP
- **» EXPECT TO PAY:** £5





"Extra content key to the game's replay value was infused into Soul Calibur"

Calibur at a tangent from the ubiquitous punch-kick-dominated school of beat-'em-ups. But there was more to it, not least the lightning-quick and multi-directional movement of characters on *Calibur*'s gorgeous stages. Now there was more to evasion than sidestepping.

"Once we'd finished *Soul Edge* and had moved on to work on *Soul Calibur*," Yotoriyama clarifies, "it wasn't the case that we decided at the start of the redevelopment process to implement an eight-way running system, but rather that it came about as the result of much time spent conducting various trial-and-error experiments. At that time, [Namco] had a separate game project at the prototype stage, which involved running around a field. We thought that looked like a lot of fun for some reason, so we ended up borrowing that motion [system] and just tentatively tried to reuse it in *Soul Calibur*. When we implemented that technology, we were surprised that it appeared to have an affinity with the system of vertical and horizontal weapon attacks that was already in place in *Soul Edge*. It was then that we first saw the potential for developing a really entertaining game along those lines, and from there we began work on a project that adopted the eight-way running system in-game."

Eventually, after persistent experimentation, *Soul Calibur* had taken shape as a dynamic, free-moving beat-'em-up and had appeared in the arcades of Japan on 30 July 1998. More importantly in the long-term, a Dreamcast version went into development as soon as work on the coin-op was finished. The Dreamcast version wasn't a sequel, but was clearly a level above the System 12 original, in spite of Namco's decision to streamline the development process for *Soul Calibur*'s Dreamcast conversion. "For the arcade version," Yotoriyama says, "we had around 60 to 70 people working on *Soul Calibur*, for the Dreamcast version, our team comprised only around 40 to 50 people. The coin-op took us roughly 14 months to develop, but development work on the Dreamcast game lasted only half of that period – around seven months."

In 1999 Sega introduced the Dreamcast-based NAOMI arcade hardware, bringing its console and coin-op divisions together with two unified formats that were almost as compatible with each other as SNK's AES and MVS had been. Prior to that shift, however, Japanese developers with both arcade and Dreamcast plans had no alternative but to port their coin-op code from a disparate array of technologies. (The NAOMI format was open to use by third-party developers, a notable example of NAOMI-to-Dreamcast success being Capcom's *Power Stone*, so in principle Namco could have availed itself of such convenience had *Soul Calibur* not already been designated as a System 12 project.)

In Namco's case, the pressure was on to transform *Soul Calibur* from a System 12 game to a Dreamcast one. Yotoriyama remembers the redevelopment period with something of a grimace: "I remember how different the special characteristics of the System 12 and Dreamcast hardware were – colouring methods, the accuracy of internal calculations, translucency display methods… the differences seemed to be endless. Porting the game from System 12 to the Dreamcast might seem like a simple proposition, but [even] then [neither piece of] hardware gave us a surplus of power to work with – it wasn't like today. So while we were aiming for 'total balance', the fact that we had to economise various aspects of the Dreamcast game was no different to how things worked with the System 12 version. And on top of all that, we only had seven months to develop the Dreamcast version, which was a really short deadline and put a terribly strict [imposition] on development…"

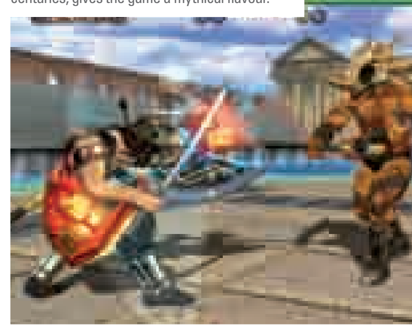
With a development window of only seven months, it's hardly surprising to hear that the final Dreamcast version of *Soul Calibur* was not quite what the team had hoped for, although at the time it was far more than early Dreamcast adopters could rightly have expected. But Namco was determined to do things the right way. It might have been easier to use Windows CE as a development shortcut, as per the rush-job Dreamcast conversion of *Sega Rally 2*, but there would have been a drop in performance. Yotoriyama's team were sufficiently motivated to settle only for the best and he is rightly proud of his team's refusal to compromise, and of the classic game they produced: "Visual design, character motions, programming, sound… every part of the game was, at that time, even looking at things from a global perspective, at a high level and also had great balance. It's the fact that *Soul Calibur* was a production of fine balance that I like more than anything else. Every aspect of the game was developed by people who would not give up and who possessed the will to investigate all [possible solutions]. It was the product of people who did whatever was necessary. Being able to bring such a game to users and have it evaluated by them, and sensing that they'd appreciated what we wanted to put across… we were extremely happy."

Players, too, were generally elated with what Namco had to offer. The Dreamcast version made use of hardware features such as VGA support, and was also compatible with the Puru Puru Pack (providing force feedback) as well as the Sega-built Dreamcast Arcade Stick, which – as one of the most robust joysticks ever manufactured – completed the arcade-at-home experience perfectly. And, as with the PlayStation build of *Soul Edge*, extra content key to the game's replay value had been infused into Dreamcast *Soul Calibur*. There was a Team Battle mode, not found in the arcade edition, which borrowed a page from the book of *Virtua Fighter 3tb*; a Survival game to test fighters' endurance; and a Mission mode was added to challenge players with various objectives, rewarding success with the in-game currency needed to buy bonus items.

These features, as well as some gameplay balance tuning and the inclusion of other Dreamcast bonuses, such as additional costumes and an extra character (Cervantes De Leon), were the culmination of typically thorough planning and research by Yotoriyama and his team. "We examined various beat-'em-ups that were being launched around that time," Yotoriyama says, "and we considered how far we should develop existing play styles and to what extent people would be willing to play fighting games developed in [various] styles. We only decided which [direction to take Dreamcast *Soul Calibur* in] after considering what would be the best path for users to walk along when playing. We wrote in detail on paper the process through which users would play the game, and we then decided whether we should adopt or reject various features and contents while at the same time making mock-ups [to project how such features could be integrated]."

The development of *Soul Calibur* was a race to meet a seven-month deadline, partly enforced so that *Soul Calibur* could be shipped at the launch of the Dreamcast hardware in the United States, so it's hardly surprising to learn that some ideas had to be shelved. But, as Yotoriyama is quick to remind us, any omissions were fed back into the *Soul Calibur* loop as the series progressed to its situation today, with the latest iteration taking *Soul Calibur* back to the top of the charts: "We had a few ideas that didn't quite make the [final Dreamcast version], including [a reappearance of] the Extra Weapons mode from *Soul Edge* and the ability for fighters to enhance their weapons. But happily we were able to implement these and other features in *Soul Calibur*s *II* through *IV*…"

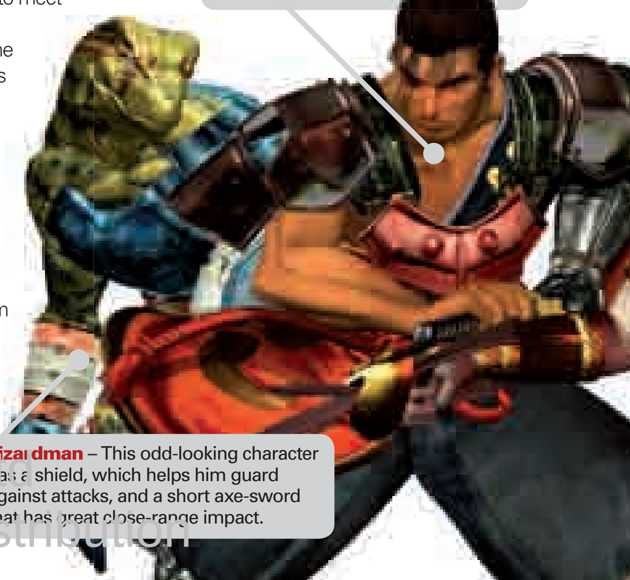




» The historical settings for the fights, as well as a complex story that takes players back many centuries, gives the game a mythical flavour.



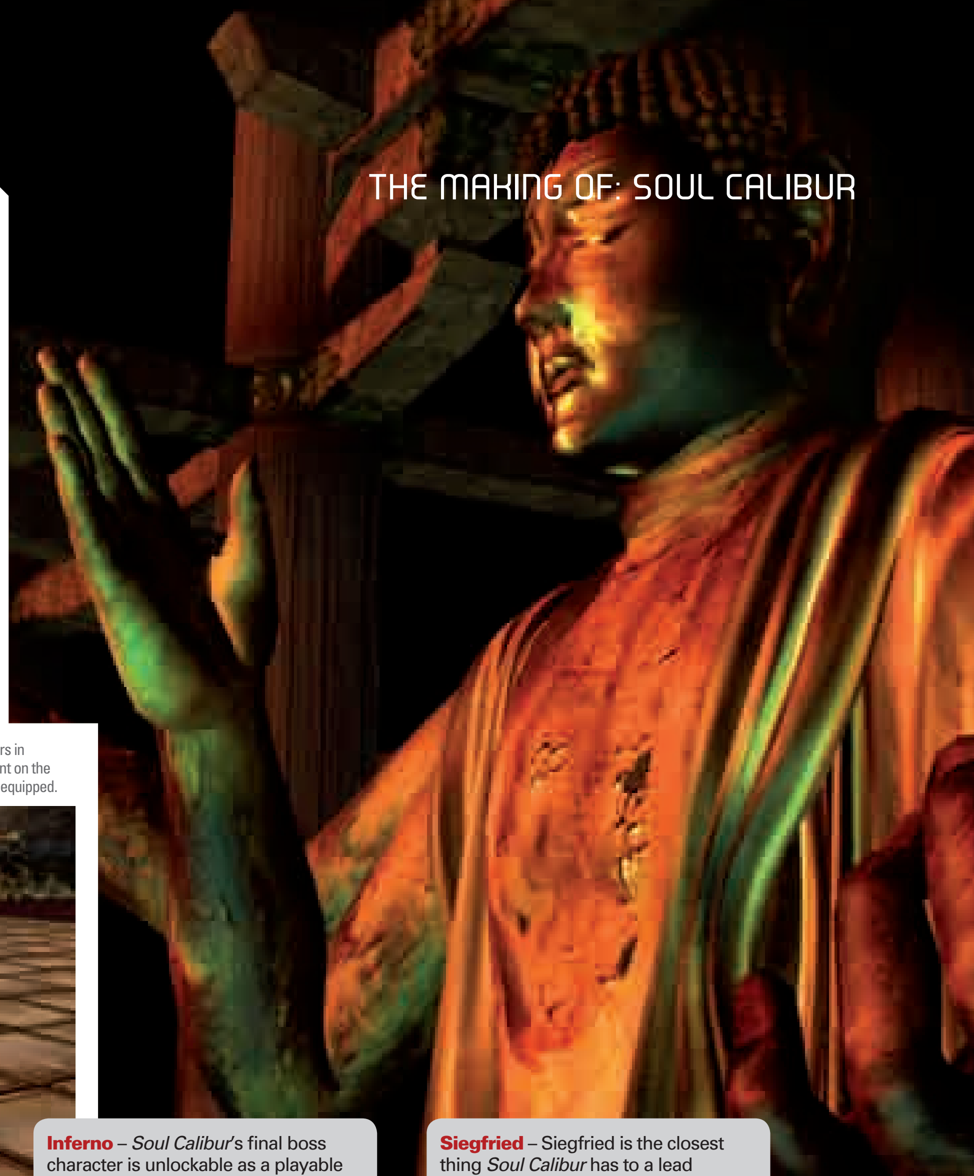
Sophitia – Buxom Sophitia is a Greek warrior armed with a fairly standard sword and shield combo – a pretty all-rounder.



Mitsurugi – Mitsurugi, a samurai, uses a katana (no Dreamcast link) blade. He's one of the sharpest fighters in *Soul Calibur*, renowned for his quick movement and immense power.

Lizardman – This odd-looking character has a shield, which helps him guard against attacks, and a short axe-sword that has great close-range impact.





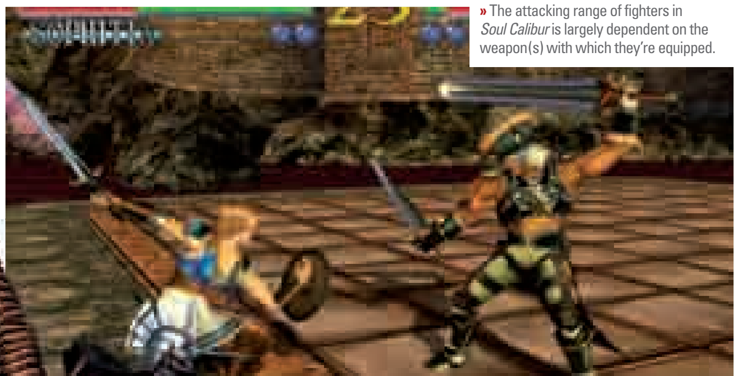
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

ROLLING THUNDER (PICTURED)
SYSTEMS: ARCADE AND VARIOUS CONSOLES AND MICROS
YEAR: 1986

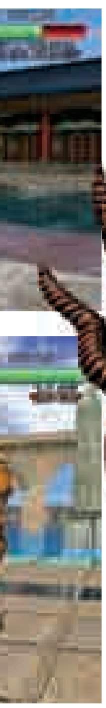
SPLATTERHOUSE
SYSTEMS: ARCADE, PC-ENGINE, FM TOWNS
YEAR: 1988

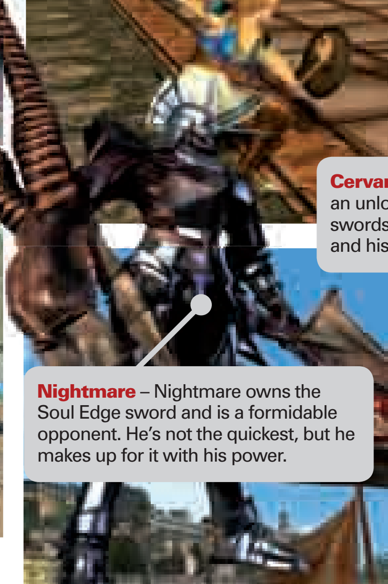
TEKKEN 2
SYSTEMS: ARCADE, PLAYSTATION
YEAR: 1995





» The attacking range of fighters in *Soul Calibur* is largely dependent on the weapon(s) with which they're equipped.

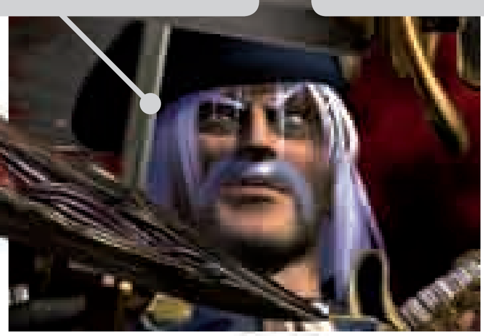


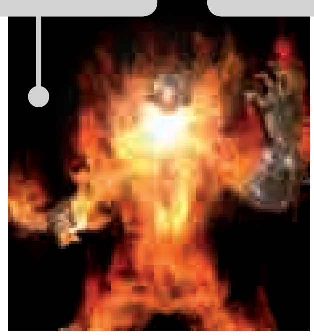


Cervantes – This deadly Spaniard is an unlockable character who uses two swords. One is longer than the other and his attacking speed is ferocious.

Inferno – *Soul Calibur*'s final boss character is unlockable as a playable character in the Dreamcast version. Inferno has everything at his disposal.

Siegfried – Siegfried is the closest thing *Soul Calibur* has to a lead character. He's clearly dressed for the part with a shimmering silver outfit.







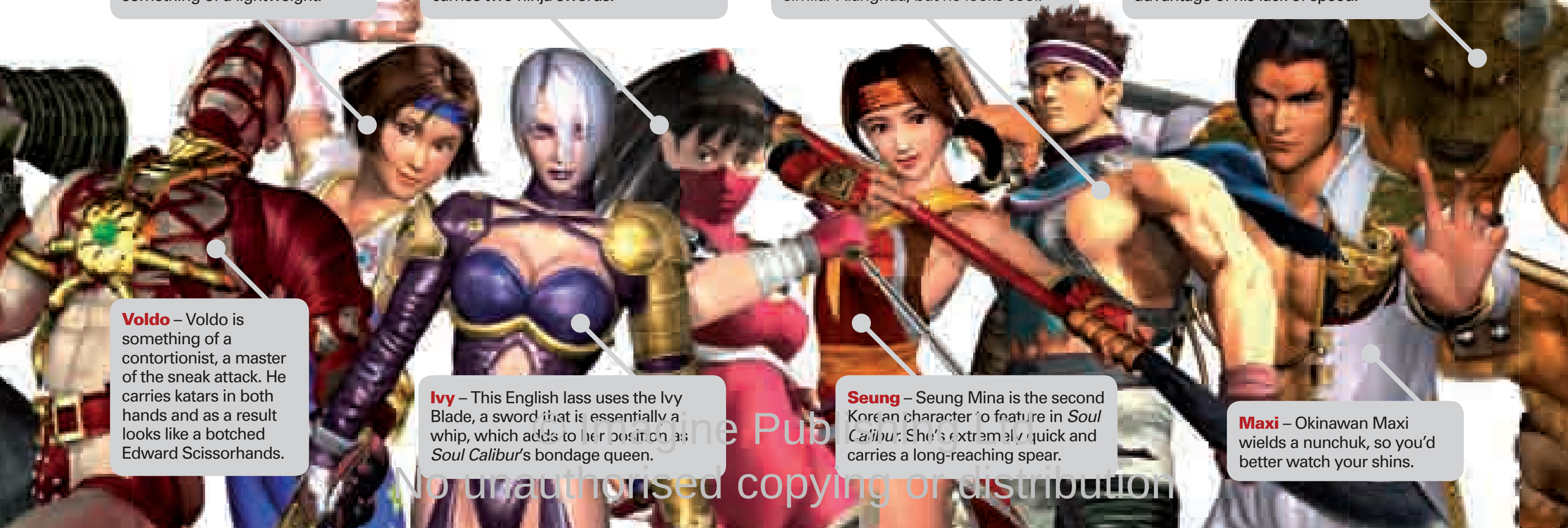
Nightmare – Nightmare owns the Soul Edge sword and is a formidable opponent. He's not the quickest, but he makes up for it with his power.

Xianghua – Xianghua is a Chinese girl with Chinese blades. She's quick off the mark, but is something of a lightweight.

Taki – Taki is the quickest *Soul Calibur* contender. She not only moves like a ninja late for an appointment: she also carries two ninja swords.

Hwang – Korean Hwang is armed with a Chinese sword and has strong kicking. He's not as easy to use as the similar Xianghua, but he looks cool.

Rock – Rock carries a mace and is certainly intimidating, although he can be defeated relatively easily by taking advantage of his lack of speed.



Voldo – Voldo is something of a contortionist, a master of the sneak attack. He carries katars in both hands and as a result looks like a botched Edward Scissorhands.

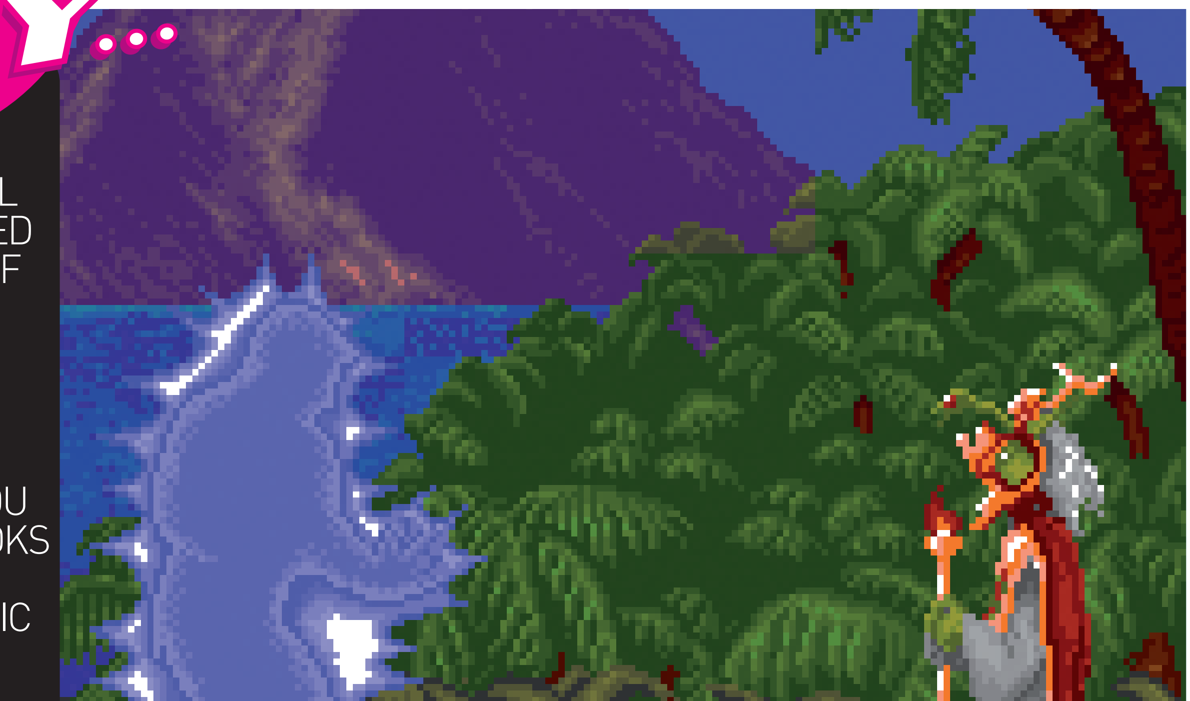
Ivy – This English lass uses the Ivy Blade, a sword that is essentially a whip, which adds to her position as *Soul Calibur*'s bondage queen.

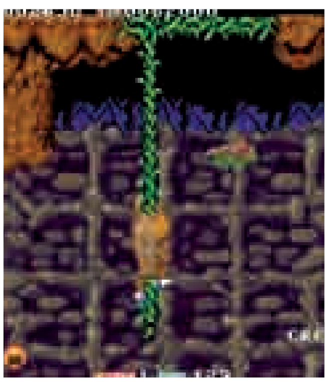
Seung – Seung Mina is the second Korean character to feature in *Soul Calibur*. She's extremely quick and carries a long-reaching spear.

Maxi – Okinawan Maxi wields a nunchuk, so you'd better watch your shins.

WHY YOU MUST PLAY… TOKI

WE SHOULD ALL BE WELL VERSED IN THE STORY OF DONKEY KONG, BUT HAVE YOU EVER HEARD OF THE TALE OF TOKI? THIS ISSUE'S WHY YOU MUST PLAY LOOKS BACK AT AN ARCADE CLASSIC BOASTING A LITTLE BIT OF MONKEY MAGIC!





» Toki's an agile little scamp, especially in those bright blue sneakers.



» It wouldn't be a platform game without an obligatory underwater stage where you have to fight a giant fish with grey hair.

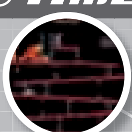
One of the finer aspects about retro games – in particular platform games – is their sheer love for the irreverent. We've lost count of the amount of times we've steered a chirpy snowman through a load of neon bandanas, bounded from colourful bricks on to a snaggletooth's forehead and ventured inside a juxtaposing world where a sporadic ecosystem allows an 'Ice Land' and 'Fire Country' to live in perfect harmony without so much as an aggressive cold front in sight.

Toki is a platform-stroke-run-'n'-gun game that sits firmly inside that irreverent camp (well kinda… there's no Ice Land). It's wildly silly, is smeared with prehistoric cartoon imagery and is maddeningly challenging.

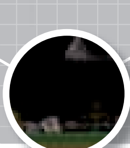
Playing the role of Toki, our titular hero is a mild-mannered caveman warrior suffering from acute gigantism. He's mad deep head over heels in love with a girl named Miho, and it shows. Toki is strong, strapping and quite a bit naked (all the marks of healthy living and healthy loving), but his world and physical impressiveness is suddenly rocked when his girlfriend is ensnared by a giant floating blue hand; the evil doing of an evil bug-eyed wizard named Bashtar. When Toki dashes to save Miho the wizard does a plop in his dress and quickly transforms our imposing muscular cave-dwelling hero into a bubble-vomiting and continually smiling chimp. And it's here the frivolity begins.

Thankfully, in his monkey state, Toki is blessed with the power to honk up fire-spittle to burn the faces off his enemies. And Toki also

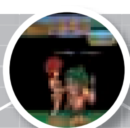
TIMELINE



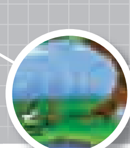
DONKEY KONG
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1981



GHOSTS 'N GOBLINS
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1985



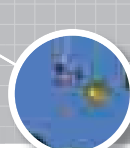
CAVEMAN NINJA
Version Featured: Arcade
Year Released: 1991



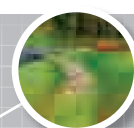
SUPERFROG
Version Featured: Amiga
Year Released: 1993



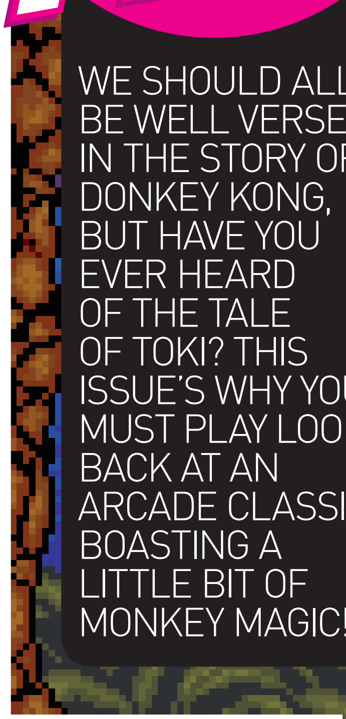
BOOGERMAN
Version Featured: Mega Drive
Year Released: 1994



EARTHWORM JIM
Version Featured: Mega Drive
Year Released: 1994



CONKER'S BAD FUR DAY
Version Featured: N64
Year Released: 2001



THE CONVERSIONS













1. AMIGA
Wow, this port ticks all of the right boxes. It replicates the thrills and spills of the arcade game brilliantly. Handled by Ocean France and drawn by the talented artist Philippe Dessoly (*Ivanhoe*) this port is flawless, looks brilliant and gets our vote for the best version of *Toki*.

2. COMMODORE 64
Replicating those dazzling arcade visuals was never going to happen, but the blocky and woolly moving images we get, and the absence of vertical firing, makes a difficult game just frustrating. There are no multi-loads though, which is a real bonus, but sadly it's still an average port for the C64 we're afraid.

3. NES
This colourful port, which was developed by Taito, is pretty good. First, you'll notice it comes with a *Super Mario Bros*-style two-player mode, and second, it's also the only version of the game where you have a health bar. The level arrangement is faithful to the original but it's a bit of a doozey to finish, which is a shame.

4. MEGA DRIVE
Someone at TAD was clearly on an absinthe and celery diet when they developed this weird and tampered-with Mega Drive port. We get a snazzy new intro and a two-player mode like the NES port. Toki looks like a hairy baby, and the level arrangement has been tweaked so much it loses that brilliant pacing.

5. ATARI ST
Despite looking somewhat like a washed-out Amiga port, *Toki* on the Atari ST proves to be another solid arcade conversion. The level and enemy layouts remain faithful enough to the arcade port. Sadly, though the vibrancy and presentation of the Amiga port just pips it.

6. ATARI LYNX
The Lynx is renowned for its sublime arcade conversions and *Toki* is no different. A fantastic portable port of the game that stays remarkably faithful to the arcade game. It even tries to replicate the original's colourful lustre; as a result it looks a shade garish and so the action can sometimes be a little disorientating.

handily acquires four flob upgrades that power-up his fiery saliva glands and make easier work of the hordes of zombie apes and pesky bosses that he encounters on the quest. As well as weapon upgrades, Toki will also come by gold trophies on his adventures that will award him items of clobber to help him… erm… clobber his adversaries. An American football helmet gives him the power needed to momentarily noggin-butt enemies off the edge of the screen and a pair of fetching blue sneakers affords him a much needed agility boost.

One of the most impressive aspects of *Toki* is the sheer amount of interaction in the game. Toki can climb and swing from vines, take a spin in a mine cart and use 16-ton weights to catapult himself into the air to reach otherwise unattainable platforms. But with no energy bar and a thickset composition, progression is certainly no easy task.

Toki actually shares a lot of similarities with Capcom's *Ghosts 'N Goblins*. They both use plenty of humour, have arbitrary enemies, employ a similar save-the-damsel narrative, and both rely on shovelling on plenty of variety to help douse the flames of fury that engulf you from its challenging gameplay.

While most remember the game for its big-headed and bad-mannered simian protagonist, *Toki* should really be remembered for offering a classic slice of old-school tongue-in-cheek arcade action. Bolstering the game's affinity for the big and boisterous are some really imaginative looking end-of-level bosses. They can also be pretty taxing, too.

While Donkey Kong can certainly consider himself to be the king of the jungle, after coming top of the tree in our list of top 25 arcade games in **Retro Gamer** 54, Toki certainly makes an entertaining jester.

THINGS TO LOOK OUT FOR



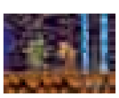
BOSSES
As taxing as they are, the game's bosses – in particular the final boss – are wildly inventive. This one is the first level guardian.



POWER-UPS
Toki's prehistoric world is littered with historical inaccuracies: football helmets (1896) and sneakers (the Sixties). They do make the game easier though.



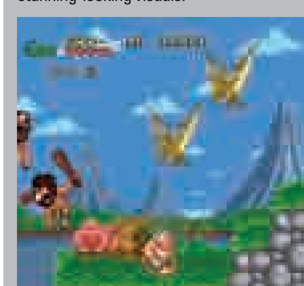
SPITTING
Toki can bounce onto the heads of his enemies (usually killing them outright) and spit for a long range attack, using an insatiable amount of flob.



ZOMBIE APES
One of the most striking enemies are the zombie apes. They rise up from the floor at the most impromptu moments – thankfully they're pretty easy to kill.

TRY THIS NEXT

JOE & MAC: CAVEMAN NINJA
If you like your platform games with a prehistoric twist then you can't go far wrong with *Joe & Mac: Caveman Ninja*. Data East's game is similar in look – lovely chunky broad tactile visuals – and feel to *Toki*. Both games seem to gel platforming and run-'n'-gun-style action brilliantly. While the Mega Drive port boasts probably the most faithful home conversion, in terms of gameplay, we have to recommend the SNES port for the extra content and stunning-looking visuals.



ATIC ATAC

A JOYFUL KNIGHTMARE OF A GAME



- » **PUBLISHER:** ULTIMATE PLAY THE GAME
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **GENRE:** ARCADE ADVENTURE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ZX SPECTRUM
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £7



HISTORY

One of the greatest pleasures of retro gaming is witnessing the sheer passion that programmers put into their incredible work. They may have had limited resources and a canvas far removed from the photographic realities of today, but their enthusiasm screamed over the top of their relatively primitive pixel creations.

Atic Atac captures that thrill, with Tim and Chris Stamper producing a game with lots of care and attention. That it was published by Ultimate was no surprise, the software house having had a knack for creating great games. And that it was raved over by the computing mags of the day was less hype and more appreciation that gaming had taken a fresh twist and had advanced another level.

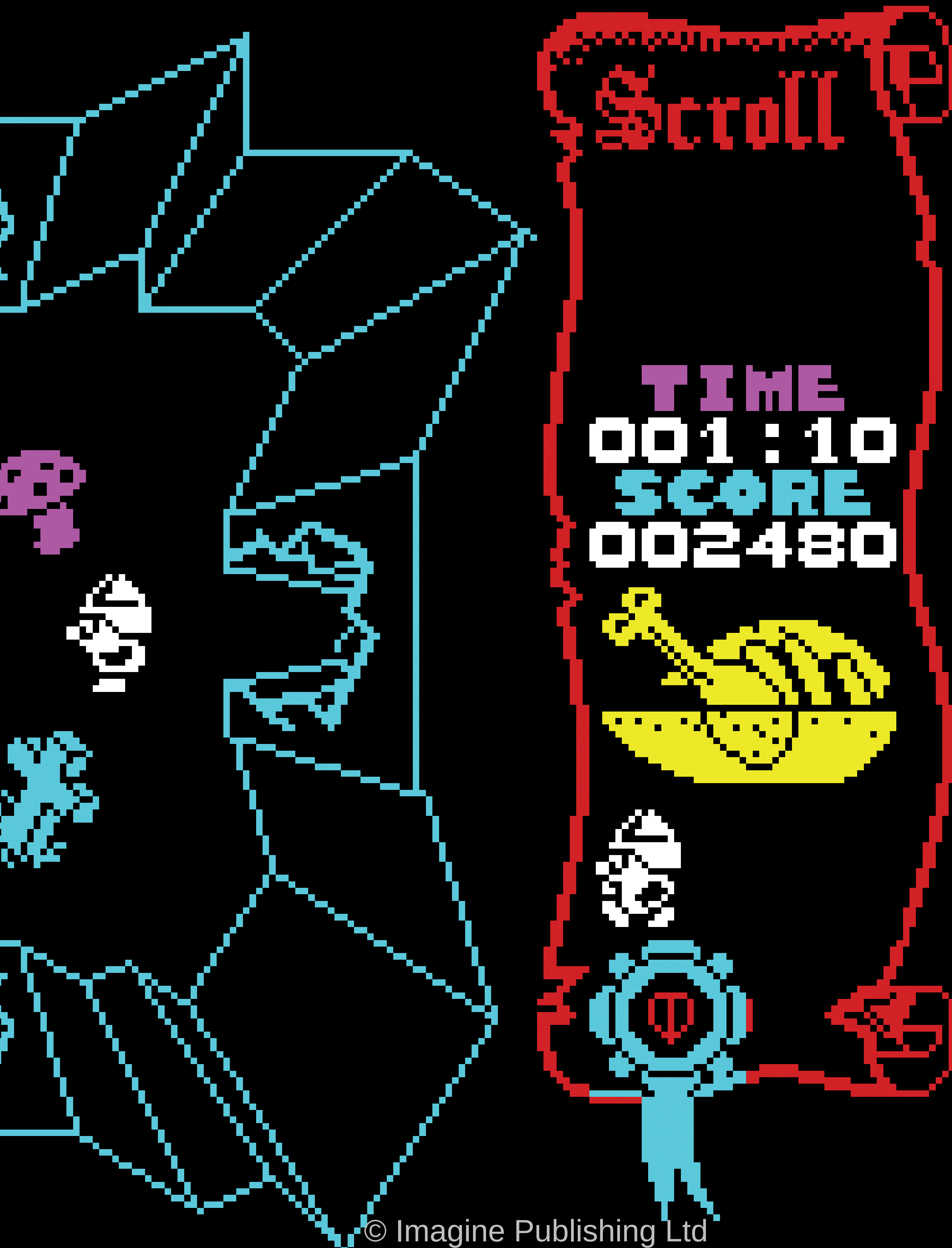
Remakes of *Atic Atac* have built on the simple, top-down view of the game's line drawings, fleshing them out with gleaming graphics. The magic of the original can't be beaten, however, and the flip-screen visuals are more than adequate as you explore the 150-room, five-floor castle in a bid to find the golden key of ACG (standing for Ultimate's parent company, Ashby Computer Graphics) and escape.

One of *Atic Atac*'s hallmarks is its level of difficulty. Whether you play as the serf, knight or wizard, it's brain-bashingly hard. Waiting for some doors to open pumps the adrenaline, finding you haven't got the right key for one of the four coloured doors causes gnashing of teeth. Joy awaits the finding of a secret passage.

As any schoolboy gaming guru would have told you, though, it is all to do with forward planning. And eating regularly. For bumping into monsters – being careful to avoid Frankenstein, Hunchback, the Devil, Mummy and Dracula – causes energy levels to drop and the turkey on the screen to turn to bone, which proves a neat and original visual trick.

Not for nothing did this game end up topping the Spectrum charts for months, the playground discussions enticing new gamers to give it a go. The difficult part today is finding a way to play – the game is of 'denied' status and is not freely downloadable.



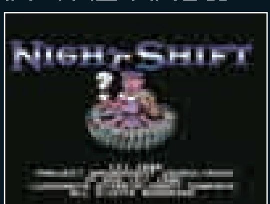

Scroll
TIME
001:10
SCORE
002480

THE MAKING OF... NIGHT SHIFT



ONE OF LUCASFILM GAMES' FINAL 8-BIT RELEASES, THE HIGHLY ORIGINAL NIGHT SHIFT, WAS DEVELOPED A LONG WAY FROM CALIFORNIA, BY A GROUP OF YOUNG AND TALENTED UK-BASED PROGRAMMERS. MIKE BEVAN REVEALS THE REMARKABLE TALE OF FRED AND FIONA FIXIT, AND A TEMPERAMENTAL TOY-MAKING MACHINE, APTLY NAMED THE BEAST

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** LUCASARTS/US GOLD

» **DEVELOPER:** PROJECT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL

» **RELEASED:** 1990

» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** INDIANA JONES AND THE FATE OF ATLANTIS: THE ACTION GAME (1992), CYBERMORPH (1993), BLAST CHAMBER (1996), ROLLCAGE (1999)

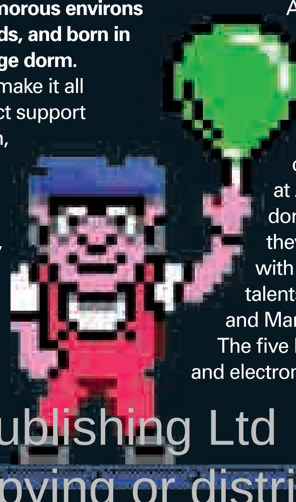
» **GENRE:** PLATFORM ACTION/PUZZLE

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5+ (DEPENDING ON VERSION)

In its first two decades, LucasArts remained primarily a self-publishing developer, whose projects were created almost exclusively by in-house talent, often under a veneer of relative secrecy, and usually in the rather agreeable surroundings of Skywalker Ranch. Indeed, only a handful of externally produced titles that haven't been based around the *Star Wars* or *Indiana Jones* franchises have been published bearing its logo – the work of a select few privileged off-site development studios. So Retro Gamer is chuffed to report that instead of being dreamt up among the opulence of George Lucas's famous pad in the Californian wilderness, *Night Shift* was coded in the glamorous environs of the West Midlands and the suburbs of Leeds, and born in the halls and corridors of a Birmingham college dorm.

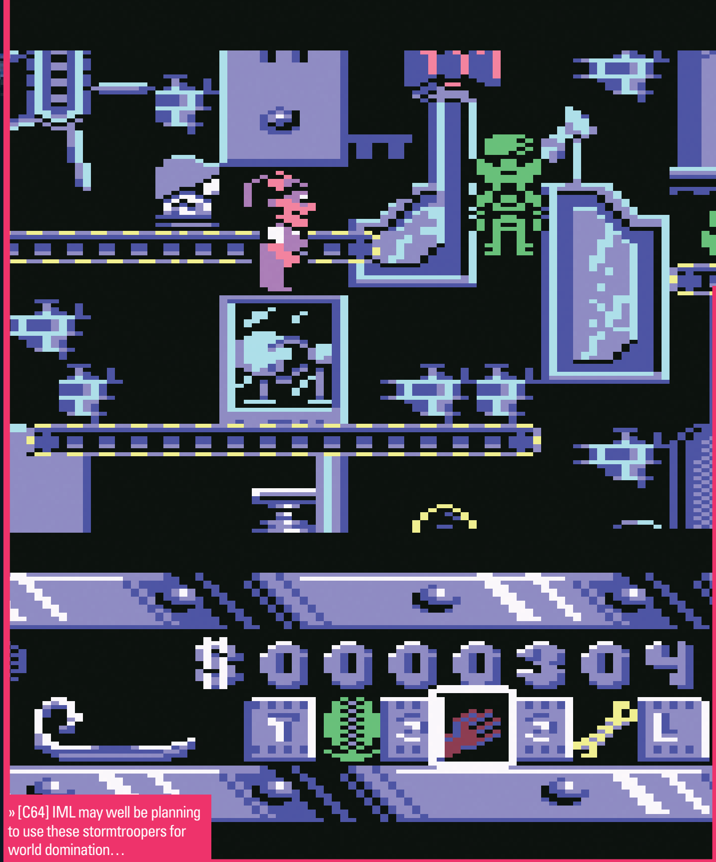
Jon Dean is the man who pulled strings to make it all happen. He started in the industry as a product support specialist at Atari's UK headquarters in Slough, later helping to launch the XE range and the Atari ST. Disillusioned by Atari's corporate direction, which was becoming increasingly detached from its celebrated gaming heritage, he left in 1986 to join Activision as European software development manager. It's here Jon made some industry contacts that would soon prove useful, after Activision won the distribution and 8-bit conversion rights to Lucasfilm's games, which included titles such as *Ballblazer* and *Rescue On Fractalus!*.

"When I left Activision in 1988 I started my own business, Project Management Consultancy (PMC), effectively a freelance games producer and designer," remembers Jon. "I worked with many different companies – publishers (mostly US and Japanese who needed someone local to project manage games they had in development with European studios) and developers (mostly UK studios that needed help learning project management, or growing their business). Among my clients was Lucasfilm Games, with whom I had worked at Activision, where they had been an affiliate label.



"Several clients had asked if I could develop games, not just produce, so I decided to find a small studio to collaborate with," Jon continues. "I knew of a bunch of graduates who were looking to start up shop – they had created a conversion of *Super Sprint* on the Atari ST for me at Activision and were very good. So I went to their dorms in Birmingham to meet, and proposed that they start a company, which would work exclusively with PMC. Attention To Detail was born – the collective talents of Chris Gibbs, Fred Gill, Jon Steele, Jim Torjussen and Martin Green."

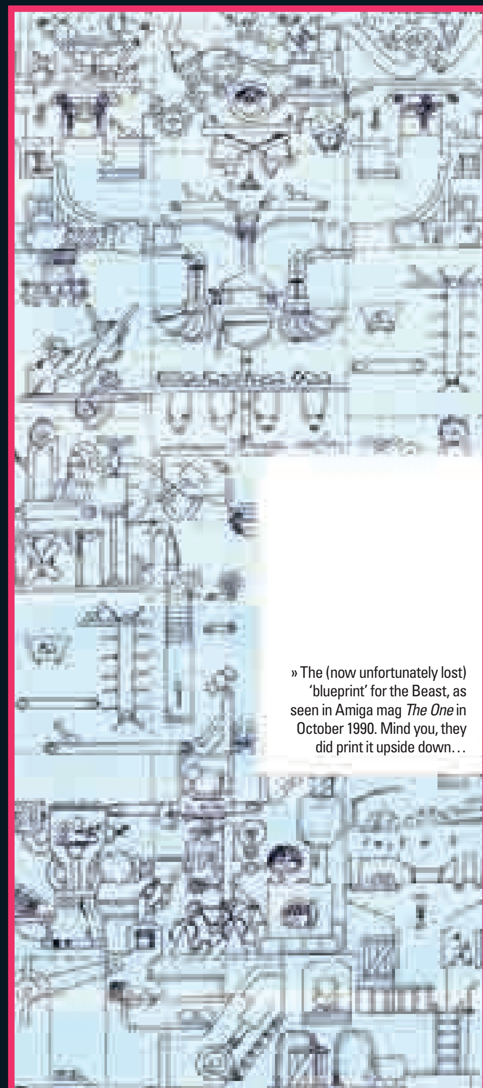
The five had met while students on various computing and electronic engineering courses at Aston University. "We

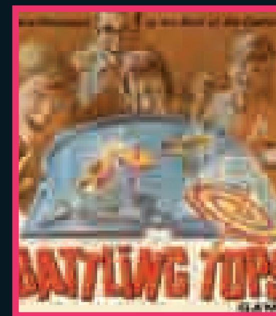


» [C64] IML may well be planning to use these stormtroopers for world domination…



» [Amiga] Choose your worker Player One. Fiona may look nimbler, but isn't actually any faster than the portly Fred.


» The (now unfortunately lost) 'blueprint' for the Beast, as seen in Amiga mag *The One* in October 1990. Mind you, they did print it upside down…



PITCH-ME-DO

As well as the *Fixit* idea, ATD had a number of interesting game concepts that never quite made it past the proposal stage. Chris recalls a few:

***Marionette* – "A game where the player would be a puppeteer – and gameplay would revolve around mastering puppet movement. We would have fun with the physics of strings pulling limbs, and what might happen if strings were cut and you had to play around that…"**

***Vector Man* – "A guy made of basic 2D polygonal blocks – whose animation was stored by having co-ordinates of the location and rotation of each block per frame. This was an incredibly efficient storage system, allowing for thousands of frames on the early 8-bit platforms, and combined with block shapes that allowed rotation of vector man into and out of the screen gave a uniquely fluid 3D look never seen before."**

***Battle Tops* – "An idea from our course mate and flatmate Nalin Sharma, based on the plastic toys of a similar name."**

got to know each other through the first two years, and four of us later shared the same digs," recalls Chris. "We were all pretty competitive in our classes and had strong hobbyist backgrounds, based on the Spectrum, VIC-20 and BBC Micro era, and we shared a common interest in high-performance computing and fun stuff, including games, and not wanting to go down the traditional path of software consultants."

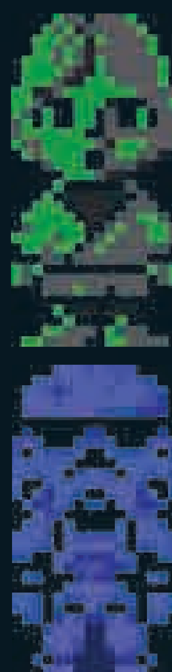
Fred Gill had already tasted success after Firebird had published his Spectrum shooter *Octan*, and Chris's project with Martin, and Jon Steele, the Atari *Super Sprint* conversion, had been the trio's first paid game – completed during the 12-week summer holiday before their final year. "Jon [Dean] was Activision's producer for *Super Sprint* – that's how we met him," says Chris. "He was a fantastic guy to work with, especially in those early industry days when a lot of unprofessional people were trying to make a quick buck; he was someone with a mature professional outlook who really helped us understand the industry from a business perspective."

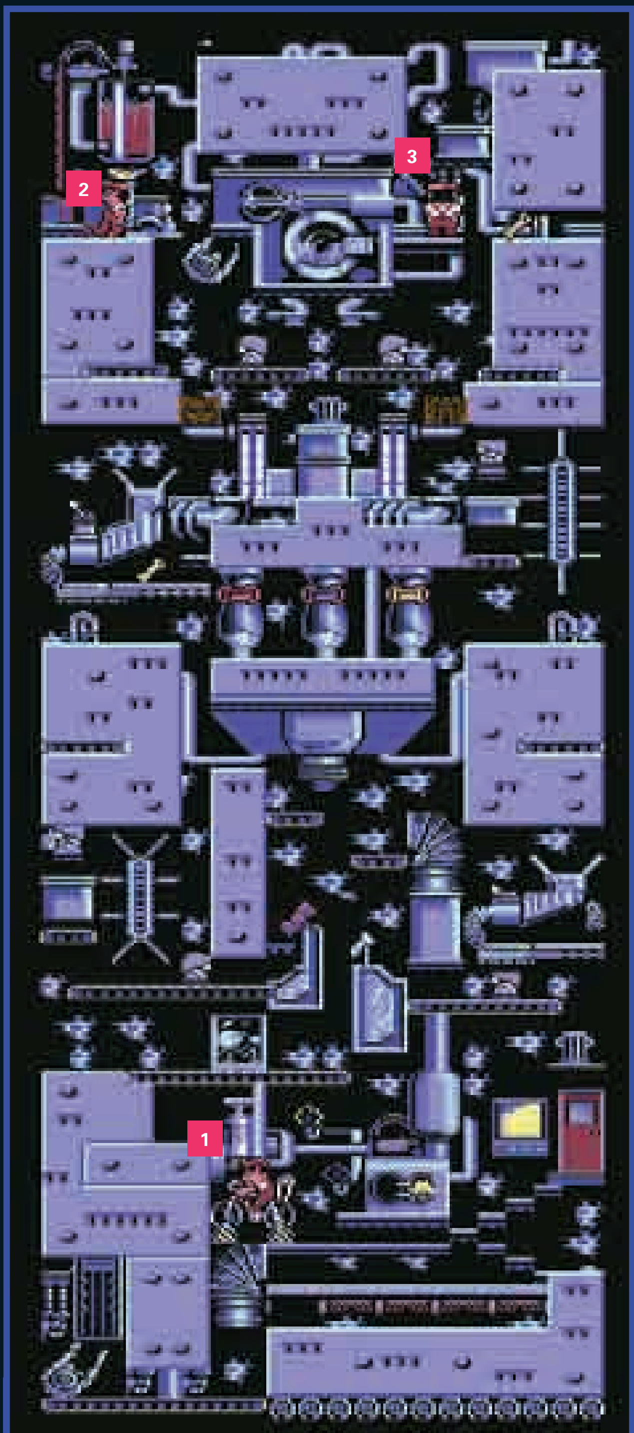
It was great timing for the five graduates, who were eager for an exchange of ideas with an interested and trusted working partner. "Once we'd decided to start Attention To Detail, he was the first person we turned to for potential work, and his enthusiasm for our game ideas was a real confidence booster. Jon had contacts and opportunities and could open doors we didn't know existed – we were bursting with ideas which he helped sift and target toward potential publishers."

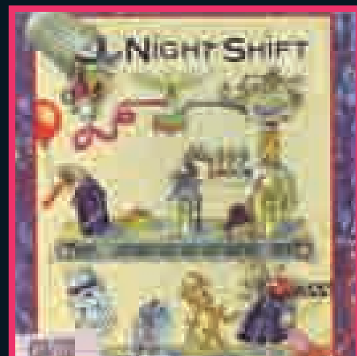
One of those early ideas was *Fixit*, a game in which players took the role of a beleaguered factory employee trying to keep an unreliable Heath Robinson-style machine (the affectionately nicknamed Beast) running without breaking down every few minutes. To provide power to the machine the player would have to jump on a bicycle and pedal furiously to help charge its enormous batteries. Pesky lemming-like critters would jump suicidally into its gears, jamming the machine unless dealt with quickly. For Chris the main game idea had stemmed from a childhood love of engineering.

"It all started from a graphical perspective, rather than a game mechanic perspective," reveals Chris. "I was doodling drawings of pistons, conveyors and sprockets. I'd always loved Meccano and mad professors inventing machines with loads of gadgets and moving parts. As I drew the machine grew and grew on the page, and I imagined a flow of parts moving around the machine in different stages of construction. It then hit me that it would be really fun to actually run around the machine, treating it like an animated platformer, where the goal was to make the machine work properly – and from that I doodled a drawing of Fred Fixit in overalls with a big wrench and the idea was born."

Jon felt the idea was strong enough to pitch to industry contacts and publishers, and there was one who he'd heard might be interested in expanding their horizons to include possible outsourced product. "I visited Lucasfilm and met with [producer] Akila 'AJ' Redmer," says Jon. "They were

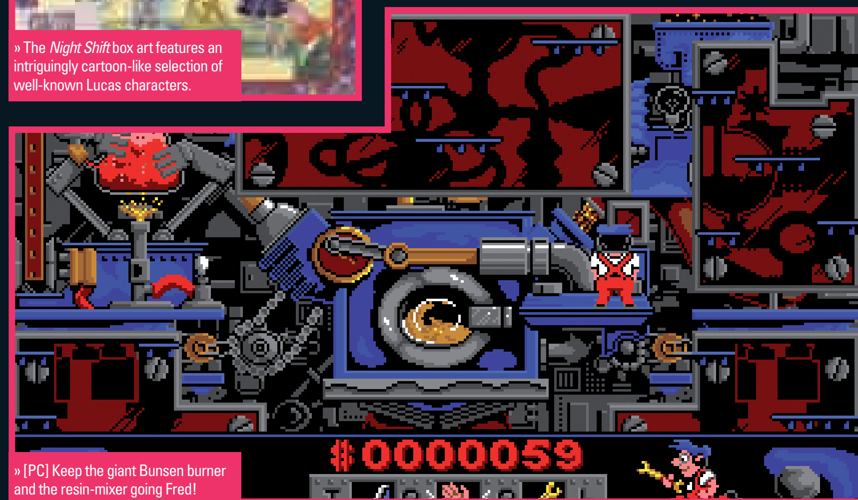




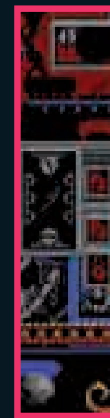


» The *Night Shift* box art features an intriguingly cartoon-like selection of well-known Lucas characters.





» [PC] Keep the giant Bunsen burner and the resin-mixer going Fred!





SHIFT IT

How to kick-start the Beast on Level 1…

1 **Hop on to the bicycle and waggle the joystick in a circular motion to charge up the battery.**

2 **Kick the plug into the socket at the top-left corner of the production line.**

3 **Use the wrench to tighten the loose bolt on the resin-mixer.**

Voilà! The Beast should steam into action and start churning out miniature stormtroopers.

Make sure the heads go on top of the bodies and not vice versa!

broadening their base as a publisher and were looking for new games, ideally ones that used their existing IP. I got the tour, and also a trip to see Sprockets and ILM. Remarkable!"

Attention To Detail had moved into new office premises in Birmingham, and had been working on a prototype for the game, now called *Mr Fixit*, when Jon returned. "I told them how incredible the Lucasfilm operation was," remembers Jon, "and that rather than pitch *Mr Fixit*, instead, why not adapt it so that it fit within the Lucasfilm world? On the flight home I had come up with the backstory that would enable this – Fred Fixit worked the night shift on a huge analogue machine in a rundown outfit called Industrial Might and Logic, the opposite of Industrial Light and Magic, which was digital and high-tech in every way.

"The broken-down machinery would make dolls of Lucas game characters, and Fred's job was to ensure that the production orders were met. The higher the game level, the more of the machine you had to control. I worked with Chris to adapt the existing game design to fit the new backstory, which we hoped was now themed enough around Lucasfilm IP to make it a game they could commission from Project Management Consultancy."

The result of this hurriedly implemented tailoring would be an in-game production line churning out a variety of rather familiar virtual toys – stormtroopers and Indy dolls, a couple of clapped-out droids and even plasticised Ednas (from *Maniac Mansion*) and Zak McKrackens. Jon also proposed a second playable character, Fiona Fixit, to add a little feminine appeal. "I pitched it, AJ loved it, and commissioned us to make not just the PC version, but also Atari ST, Amiga, Commodore 64, Spectrum and Amstrad versions as well," says Jon. "I hired another freelance developer, John Mullins, to create the 8-bit versions, with Nick Cook providing the art assets for them. ATD handled the PC and 16-bit releases.

"As I recall, AJ came up with the name *Night Shift*," explains Jon, "and LucasArts (as they were now newly branded) devised the box cover art. They also commissioned me to write the game manual. I had always been a fan of the Infocom game boxes – always a joy to open one of their games to see what trinkets were inside. So I wanted to add similar context for *Night Shift*, and incredibly LucasArts went along with it. So we had a detailed employee handbook (the instruction manual) and a fake trade magazine, in which I gave name checks to just about everyone on the project at ATD and Lucasfilm."

Chris recalls his own surprise at Jon's achievements in successfully pitching ATD's idea to such a well-regarded company. "I think we were all gobsmacked," he laughs. "We knew he was sending the pitch to the top publishers, but I don't think we really believed it would be picked up. They sent AJ to our three-room office in Birmingham and within a couple of weeks I had a letter from LucasArts helping me get an express passport in place for a trip to California. It was my first trip to America, and I fell in love with San Francisco, Skywalker Ranch, and Marin County micro-breweries!"

Back in Blighty, John Mullins began the unenviable task of squeezing the enormous, multi-screen Beast into the 8-bit versions. "The single biggest problem was just the sheer scale," he explains. "This was a game primarily designed for 16-bit systems with 512KB of RAM and squeezing it into the 8-bit systems presented a real challenge. The character-mapped nature of the Commodore 64 screen put limitations on the Beast graphics and involved us dynamically changing the character set as the screen scrolled.

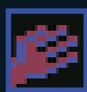




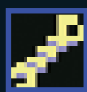
» This spoof trade mag came with 'big-box' versions. "Doug Glen was Lucasfilm's marketing guru, so I gave part of his name to the fictional Beast inventor," says Jon.

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

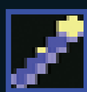
For Fred and Fiona to achieve each nightly quota of toys, mastery of the in-game toolkit is essential. Although most items can only be used once, replacements can be found scattered around each level for the hapless pair to grab between maintenance duties. Here's a quick run through the IML standard-issue inventory…



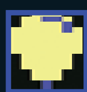
Hand Pretty self-explanatory really. Use this icon to ride the bicycle, flip switches and to turn knobs and handles.



Wrench Used to tighten the bolt on the Beast's resin-mixer at the very top of the IML production-line.



Match For lighting the burner and the furnace at the start of the shift, or if they go out.



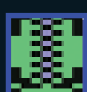
Balloon Used to float Fred or Fiona gracefully upwards to any desired location on the Beast.



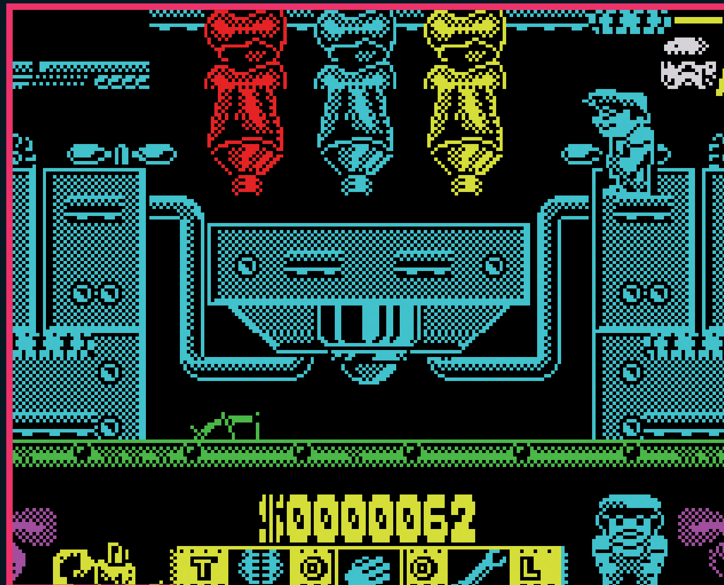
Umbrella This is handy for gliding down the Beast rapidly – the reverse of the Balloon.



Vacuum Used to suck up the mischievous lemmings and to free the Beast of potential jams.



Venus Fly Trap Another anti-lemming device, this can be planted at will to capture your furry foes.



» [Spectrum] The three paint vats where toys get a nice gloss finish.



» [C64] Here's what happens if you don't make your nightly quota. Poor old Fred.

"The bitmapped graphics on the Spectrum and Amstrad didn't cause these issues; the problem was simply the sheer quantity, so we employed a deal of reuse. We mirrored and flipped various graphics blocks to reduce the storage requirements. For instance, we only stored a quarter of the Jacob's ladders and generated the other three quarters on the fly. We stored our sprites in an unusual format, facing both right and left at the same time – when drawing we had to half flip them, but this meant they only occupied half the memory."

Smooth vertical scrolling enabled players to navigate the complexities of the Beast's machinery, but the size of each level forced the inclusion of a multi-part loading system. "The multi-loading was a pain," John admits. "We produced both disk and tape versions of the game and needed to make the multi-loading on the tape version as friendly as possible, in the end I think we made quite a good job of it.

"I worked from home in Leeds at the time," he continues, "and the lack of tools we now take for granted made working together with ATD much more problematic than it would be today. It makes me shudder now to think that we used to transfer work in progress between us, Jon and LucasArts via a state-of-the-art 2,400-baud modem. I remember watching a lot of the coverage of the Gulf War as I waited for files to transfer, and also the ridiculously large telephone bills I used to have."

When asked if he has a favourite of the 8-bit versions he worked on, John doesn't have any particular preference but has an admission. "I was really pleased with the way the Spectrum version worked out," he says. "I can't really see any ways we could have improved it and the reviews bore that out. It's still one of the few games I've ever been involved with that I've enjoyed playing once complete. Whenever I'm asked what games I've worked on, *Night Shift* is always one of the first I mention even though others I've been involved with are much better known." The game met with great critical response (the Spectrum version was a 96% *Crash* Smash) and remains one of only two original LucasArts titles of the era not to have been designed internally – *Pipe Dream*, from UK developer The Assembly Line being the other.

Chris thinks for a while, and then offers a retrospective analysis. "In hindsight, one thing I would do differently is design the Beast from a gameplay perspective, rather than purely aesthetic," he says. "I naively thought if it looked cool it would play well, but it would be improved with an understanding of how the Beast was going to challenge the player from level to level." Now an executive producer at Electronic Arts, we reckon he's not alone among the ex-Attention To Detail guys in being grateful to the opportunities provided by Jon Dean, Lucasfilm and Fred Fixit. "This," says Chris proudly, "was a story of five like-minded people all coming together at the same time, in the same place, and forming such a strong relationship of mutual respect for our respective talents, that we had the confidence to join forces and follow our dream to make games."





Thanks to Chris Gibbs and John Mullins for the interviews, and Jon Dean for his memories and additional scans and visual materials.

Whatever happened to...

MARBLE MADNESS II: MARBLE MAN

NEED TO KNOW

SYSTEM:
ARCADE

DEVELOPER:
ATARI

START OF DEVELOPMENT:
1991

DATE OF CANCELLATION:
1991

VERSION PLAYED BY RG:
ARCADE FOOTAGE PROVIDED



WITH MARBLE MADNESS COINING IT IN FOR ATARI, IT MAY SURPRISE MANY THAT ITS SEQUEL WAS CANCELLED AFTER COMPLETION. KIM WILD FINDS OUT WHY MARBLE MAN NEVER ROLLED INTO ARCADES...

Between projects, Bob Flanagan decides to follow up on an idea and create a sequel to *Marble Madness*. "I was the designer, project lead and lead engineer," he explains. "I worked with another engineer, another designer, an audio engineer, and a couple of artists. I made the decisions about the technology to be used and requested the support from our hardware group. I developed a playfield editor on the Mac."

The idea originated from Bob's desire to appeal to a younger and broader audience. "I had been wanting to do a sequel for many years," he explains. "It was a point between projects, and we had time to flush the idea out. I wanted to make the game more accessible to a younger audience. Since *Marble Madness* had so much success in the home market, I was trying to draw on what I thought were the reasons for its success."

In order to make the game stand out and reach out to its younger demographic, Bob created Marble Man, a superhero character with the ability to roll and defeat enemies with power-ups. Although sounding like something out of an action title, the core gameplay of rolling around a maze to reach the goal was left intact, in keeping with the original's style of gameplay. Regarding the creation of *Marble Madness II: Marble Man*, Bob remarks that: "The idea was to personify the marble and therefore allow the use of 'super powers', like helicopters, knobbies (for traction, like dirt bikes), invisibility and big marbles. The playfields were designed mostly by Mike Hally, a long-time designer at Atari."



» The original *Marble Man* joystick cabinet curiously missing the third joystick.



» A number of pinball mini-games was one of the new additions to the gameplay.

One of the criticisms of the original game was that at six levels it was far too short and this was something that was corrected. "The game was made of 17 levels set up in sets of four, with a mini-pinball-like bonus level between each set of four, and one final level," says Bob.

In order to make the game even more competitive, a three-player multiplayer mode was introduced, although in testing a couple of issues cropped up, namely with the scrolling. In *Marble Madness II: Marble Man*, if a player was ahead, it meant that they would have to wait for

"I WAS TRYING TO DRAW ON WHAT I THOUGHT WERE THE REASONS FOR MARBLE MADNESS'S SUCCESS"



» The smiling face of the marble is what remains of his original animation.



» *Marble Man* made a rare appearance at the California Extreme Convention in 2007



» The PCB and various overlays of Marbel Man. If only we could get our hands on it…



» Sand was one of the new surface types not featured in the original. Don't play with the bucket and spade!

other players to catch up in order to move forwards through the level, so the scrolling was changed to match that of the original *Marble Madness*.

Just like its predecessor, trackballs were initially used to control the marble but after its first test run, Bob made the curious decision to replace the trackballs with joysticks. "Bad decision on my part," admits Bob sadly. "We didn't get first place in our initial arcade trial, so I decided that the reason was because players were unfamiliar with the trackballs having played the game on the home systems with joysticks and turbo buttons. So we switched the game to use joysticks and turbo buttons. I think back and wonder how marketing allowed such a blunder."

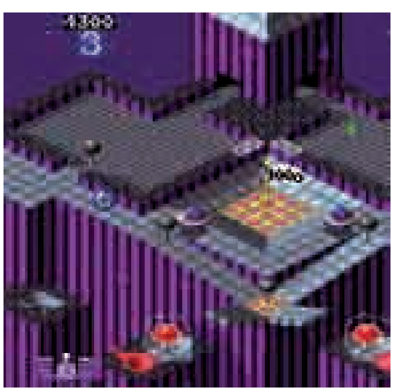
Other changes that came about due to testing involved changing the scream of the marble upon death to a more comical one, altering the score and time bubbles to normal digits, introducing an instruction screen and altering the length of the helicopter power-up, ensuring that whoever owns the power-up cannot control scrolling.

Despite proving popular at testing locations, Atari decided that it wasn't enough and cancelled the game eight months into development, despite its completion. "At the time, the sales group was stuck on only shipping games that tested in the number one spot, and we were in the top three, but not always number one," explains Bob. "Months later, they shipped another product that did not test number one, but they needed product to fill the line."

Sadly, due to copyright reasons, *Marble Madness II: Marble Man* is unlikely to be released in ROM form in the foreseeable future. The only reason two other machines exist is that Scott Evans managed to build his own cabinets after collecting parts and artwork from internet auctions and ex-Atari employees. After finding an old broken PCB board of *Marble Madness II: Marble Man*, Scott sought permission from Atari who agreed that he could have the ROMs to fix his board, provided it would never be used outside of the arcade cabinet. Without any ROM data, Scott tracked down an ex-Atari employee and Bob Flanagan who helped out with the necessary files. "There are only three [machines] that I know of," recalls Bob. "I have one, and I know the person that has the other two as mentioned previously. Atari is gone. Midway probably owns the rights, but will never do anything with them." However, the game did get some public attention at the San Jose California Extreme Convention in 2000 and later in 2007 at Atari's unreleased games' section.

Although *Marble Madness II: Marble Man* never ventured outside of the convention, Bob is still fond of his creation. "I love the game still," he admits. "My biggest regret is changing the trackballs for joysticks. I think that was a huge mistake. The game is fun to play and has a lot of unique gameplay due to the bonus pinball levels and the multitude of levels compared with the original game." At least for two people out there, *Marble Man* lives on, ready to roll for another day.

(Special thanks to Bob Flanagan for taking the time to answer our questions and to www.safestuff.com for providing us with additional images and photos).



» Even aliens want part of the action.



» Enemies were made cute to appeal to a younger audience.

GAME OVER FOR MARBLE MAN?

After testing, numerous changes were proposed in a design document to improve the game. One of the main alterations considered was ditching 'Marble Man' as it was felt by Atari that players considered it "stupid and meaningless". The plan was to remove 'Marble Man' from the cabinet, title screen, pinball spell-outs and in-game content. The proposed change was something that Bob was unaware of and felt would drastically alter the balance of the entire game. "I never heard about that. The problem would have been that all of the enemy character art was designed to match the idea of the marble man. So, there would have been a lot of rework," he says. Although changes did materialise (references to 'Marble Man' are gone from the title screen and pinball spell-outs), 'Marble Man' still resides in the cabinet artwork and game design, suggesting the alteration wasn't fully implemented.



» Another in-game shot of what could have been another classic coin-op hit.

"I LOVE THE GAME STILL. MY BIGGEST REGRET IS CHANGING THE TRACKBALLS FOR JOYSTICKS"

CONVERSION CAPERS



CHASE H.Q.



"THIS IS NANCY AT CHASE HEADQUARTERS... WE'VE GOT AN EMERGENCY HERE... OCEAN ARTIST BILL HARBISON IS FLEEING TOWARDS SOME YELLOW SUBURBS LITTERED WITH TREES THAT LOOK LIKE FEAST ICE CREAMS... THE TARGET VEHICLE IS A BLACK MONOCHROME SPORTS CAR... OVER" "10-4, NANCY, THIS IS DCI HUNT, KEEP YOUR NICK NACKS ON, MY FRIZZLE-HAIRED LOVELY"

The 'buddy cop' recipe is a simple dish to get your head around. Take one dedicated cop, plonk him into the type of family unit you'd wittingly dropkick into a furnace, let him drive a sensible and boxy-looking olive-coloured car and live inside a plush house in some leafy suburb. Then pair him up with a loose-cannon-type, someone with nothing to lose, who lives inside the glove box of a Nissan pick-up and likes his drink as much as Spider-Man likes to take photographs of himself with his legs open. Once you've firmly established your two central characters, assign them a mission (one about triads and a drug shipment usually works), hand them a loaded Panzerschreck and act surprised when they use it to level a city to flush out a ninja. But remember to add one key ingredient, the one thing every great police story needs – a good chase.

Chase H.Q. is the quintessential 'buddy cop' videogame. It took one element from cult but nonsensical action films of the Eighties and used it to create an exhilarating arcade game lampoon. Plonking you inside a black unmarked Porsche police car (good way not to draw attention to yourself, chaps), it was your job to help rugged police partners Tony Gibson and Raymond Broady capture a list of fleeing criminals. While *Chase H.Q.* is often likened to Sega's seminal checkpoint racer *OutRun*, for *Chase H.Q.*'s home conversion Bill Harbison admits that it was actually another racing game that he and programmer John O'Brien would select to play muse in their treatment of Taito's arcade classic.

"What happened was John was helping out on the *WEC Le Mans* game and basically took the structure of that game – the coding of the track – and developed it into *Chase H.Q.*," recalls Bill. "He took the code and then added in the other aspects like the trees and the road splitting. So it started off as *Le Mans*, that's were it came from. I don't know where the ST version came from, but I know the Spectrum and Amstrad conversions came from that game originally."

Given the port's arcade faithfulness you'd be forgiven for thinking that the team entered the project as ardent fans of the original arcade machine, but that wasn't the case at all.

"Well I'd not actually seen it, which was the problem. It came in, I think we got it quite early so we'd not had a chance to play it. When we saw it, everyone was very impressed with it," says Bill.

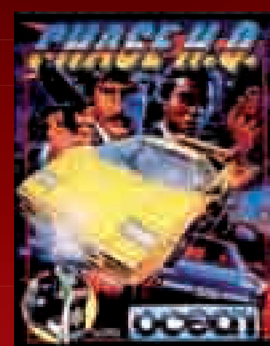
Bill and programmer John O'Brien worked on *Chase H.Q.* for around six months, and – save for a rather nice sit-down cabinet set on free play – would receive scant input from Taito with regard to the look and feel of the game.

"They sent us a cabinet to reference all of the graphics from, and to get the gameplay and layouts of the levels by ourselves," Bill explains. "We didn't get any maps, we didn't get any graphics ported out of the motherboard, we didn't get anything. We had to port it from scratch, from what we saw on the screen. We weren't able to rip graphics from the arcade board in those days, and even if we could we didn't have the software to edit it properly. I had to drive through the game with a pad and pencil on my lap to make sketches of the various animation frames, cars and roadside objects before drawing them on the Speccy."

After learning that Bill had to play through the game's five stages while scribbling down the various sprites and track layouts onto his pad, we asked him whether at that point he felt it was going to be possible to squeeze one of the slickest looking, and fastest, arcade games of the time into a humble 8-bit micro?

"I think the main thing I was worried about was the speed, and the limit of different cars and objects that we could have in the game, because obviously we

IN THE KNOW



- **PUBLISHER:** OCEAN
- **DEVELOPER:** TAITO/OCEAN
- **RELEASED:** 1989
- **GENRE:** RACING

CONVERSION CAPERS



REBEL REBEL

Like most ex-industry coders/artists/producers that we're fortunate enough to track down, Bill's first home computer was the ZX81. Bill's first 'proper' job was at Ocean, he never even had a paper round. So how did he come to break into the game's industry and land a job in one of the country's most prolific videogame developers?

"It all started with *Rebelstar Raiders*. That was the first game that I actually managed to hack and put my own graphics into it. After that I used to buy copies of *Computer & Video Games* magazine, and there was always pictures of the arcade machines that were going to be coming out in the next few months. I basically took the screenshots from the magazine and developed them into what they would look like on the Commodore 64. That was basically my portfolio when I sent it off. I had no idea that you could actually do this for a job, I just put some mock-ups together of how some of these games might look if they ever got developed for the Spectrum. And I just got a phone call saying come down and work for us."







had to cut quite a lot out. But there were also concerns about how we could solve the issue of the road dividing in two."

At the time Ocean was wary of *Chase H.Q.* suffering the same fate as Probe's home conversion of *OutRun*. *OutRun*, like *Chase*, had tracks that segued (well, in the arcade game at least) into various clement locales, and to cope with the extra memory required to paint Suzuki's shifting track the home ports of *OutRun* were multi-load. Ocean realised that this wasn't a solution that gamers would tolerate, especially in a racing game where creating a sense of fluidity and speed is paramount, so would work to get around the issue.

"We knew it was going to be a problem," says Bill. "Especially after seeing the way *OutRun* worked. We didn't want the player to come to a junction and wait for the next part of the game to load. It all had to be in there. But we managed it, and *Chase H.Q.* was the first time you could decide which way you wanted to go and didn't have to load anything in. It was all in there."

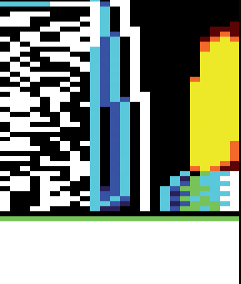
Discounting *Taito Memories 2* on PS2, and *Taito Chase H.Q Plus S.C.I.* on the Saturn, the Spectrum and Amstrad ports – both of which were the only *Chase H.Q.* ports that John and Bill were involved in – are by far the most accurate (in design and feel) to the arcade original, capturing perfectly that all-important sense of exhilaration. So how did the pair manage to get the ratios and detail on the various sprites to look so accurate?

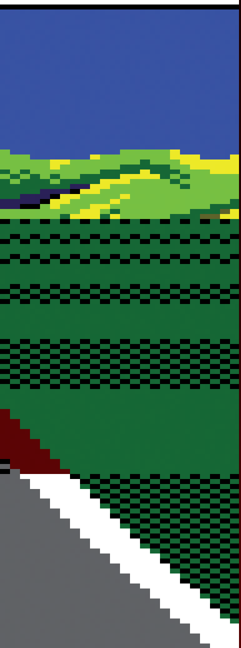
"Well, it was all mapped out on paper first so we knew that the horizon was at a certain point and the track would have to tier off at certain points and the graphics – like the cars – would all have to be a certain size to match with that perspective," Bill says. "We knew the screen size and the resolution we had to work to, so it was basically a case of determining what size we had to spare for the sprites, and drawing them within those confines. I think at that point we decided on what size we were going to make the car anyway, based on the screen size. John or Ryan programmed it and I seem to remember that they altered the track, because they could alter the perspective of the track, almost like a camera view, to fit around the car sprite."

Bill recalls that getting the scaling right for the cars and objects as they zipped towards the screen was a laborious task. At the time the Spectrum couldn't scale ably, and every sprite required six to eight versions of various sizes that needed to be drawn by hand. The more complex looking objects – the trees for instance – would need to be broken down into individual parts and then fixed together.

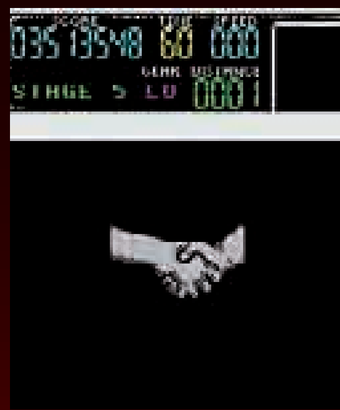
While the Spectrum and Amstrad ports are hailed as being technical triumphs by Ocean, the Commodore 64 conversion would fail to capture the same level of admiration. This was largely down to it being a port that a) played closer to Taito's ports and b) looked nothing like the original Spectrum code that Bill and John created. We pressed Bill about the C64

"I WAS ABSOLUTELY LIVID ABOUT THE SEQUEL. I DON'T KNOW WHY IT WAS GIVEN TO SOMEONE ELSE TO DO, BUT I WOULD HAVE LOVED TO HAVE DONE IT"









A MEANS FOR AN END

If you're adept enough to bag yourself five bad guys and finish *Chase H.Q.* on the Spectrum, the game rewards you with real panache by awarding you with one of the most cinematic finales to a Spectrum game. *Chase H.Q.*'s animated end screen shows our two heroes – who look distinctly like Mel Gibson and Danny Glover – being commended for their bravery and driving skills by their chief. While this is going on, Nancy also reveals a softer side to her stern and nagging demeanour by actually sounding impressed with your efforts and coming off grateful for all your handiwork. Note: the Amstrad port has the same ending – albeit drawn in a little less detail – but doesn't have the animated handshake.



conversion in a hope he'd be able to shed some light on why it played so differently.

"I don't even remember it being produced in-house," he says. "I don't think I even saw the C64 version while we were working on ours. But it may have been done out of house, I'm purely assuming it was. If it was done by someone inside the studio, then they would have just done it the way they wanted to."

We contacted Gary Bracey to try to ratify whether or not the C64 port was in fact farmed out to another developer. He kindly emailed us and debunked the claim, confirming that all of the 8-bit ports were handled in-house at Ocean.

Surprisingly, given how good the game looked, after all the graphics for the Spectrum code were finished John and Bill realised that they had quite a bit of memory left to use for something else in the game. It was then Bill suggested they try to incorporate a small animated end sequence into the game to really finish the game off with a bang.

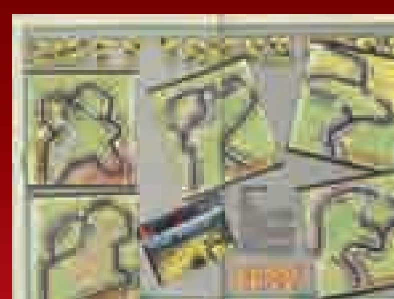
"I had been studying animation at home and wanted to put something of my own in," he says. "While working on *WEC Le Mans* I was doing the animation sequence of the car spinning around. I decided to experiment by putting motion lines or 'whizz' lines on the car to make it look smoother, and was surprised and happy with the result – especially since nobody had done it before. When the graphics were sent to the programmer he asked one of his artists to remove them because he felt they didn't work. I wasn't happy. I was even more upset when another racing title came out on the Spectrum that *did* have motion lines, and it looked good.

"With *Chase H.Q.* I wanted to put a similar stamp on it," Bill continues. "I think the inspiration behind the end sequence was either a mixture of *Miami Vice* or *Lethal Weapon*; it was based on those sorts of lines. We basically mocked up a few screenshots, as if it was a movie, and used these little montage sketches over the top of the congratulations text."

Chase H.Q. was released just prior to Christmas and its release proved a huge success for Ocean. The game sped to the top of the sales charts and was heralded, alongside *Batman: The Movie*, as one of the finest games to come out of the Mancunian software house. Ironically, the popularity of Ocean's home conversion would reignite interest in Taito's arcade cab, as many people, who had never heard of the game until sighting its write-ups in the pages of *Amstrad Action* and *Your Sinclair*, sought it out at their local arcades to experience *Chase H.Q.* in its original arcade glory.

"We knew we did a good job because we tried to do the best game we could with the machine available. We were all happy with what we'd done," says Bill. "I think we knew it was going to be successful but we didn't think it was going to be as successful as it was. When you're doing these sorts of games you don't really have a chance to sit back and think about how it's going to go, because as soon as you finish one game you're on to another. But we would follow it in the charts to see what position it was in."

Such was *Chase H.Q.*'s popularity that it would eventually be ported to pretty much every home computer going, with Taito taking on the development duties for the Master System and Game Gear ports but with shamefully lacklustre results. For the sequel, *Chase H.Q. II: Special Criminal Investigation*, development duties would fall to a new team, as Bill was tied up working on the Amiga game *Batman: The Movie*, using his talents to plot the excellent 3D racing sections for the game.



"I was absolutely livid about the sequel. I don't know why it was given to someone else to do, but I would have loved to have done it, and I think we would have done a much better job. By then I was working on *Batman: The Movie* on the Atari ST and the Amiga, so it wasn't all bad."

CONVERSION CAPERS

OTHER VERSIONS TO CONSIDER

CHASE H.Q. (MSX)
CHASE H.Q. (GAME BOY)
CHASE H.Q.: SECRET POLICE (GBC)
TAITO MEMORIES 2 (PS2)
TAITO CHASE H.Q. PLUS S.C.I. (SATURN)



The name *Chase H.Q.* refers to the specialist crime unit that our heroes work for; one that forces cops to catch fleeing criminals in a high-powered unmarked police car in a mere 120 seconds. That's a terribly stringent target to meet – solving crimes in two minutes – and with only five fugitives to capture in the game (beginning with Ralph, the Idaho Slasher and ending with the Eastern Bloc Spy) it means Popeye Doyles can usually finish the entire game in about ten minutes. Running from Taito's Z System hardware, there's little variety in *Chase*'s track designs, but there's plenty of interaction that occurs between you and the tarmac. It undulates, forks and is littered with boxes and tumbleweeds to clip and launch into the air. Your car is also fitted with three nitros, wailing sirens and there's plenty of traffic to weave through. Your Porsche 928 grips the road better than *OutRun*'s Testarossa, and, as a result, the driving feels more solid. So did all these wonderful little nuances make it to the home ports, let's take a look…

THE CHASE H.Q. CONVERSIONS



Amstrad CPC

What we have here is simply the greatest arcade port ever released for the Amstrad. *Chase H.Q.* on the CPC looks superb, and shows up perfectly why Sugar's machine could do arcade ports with Technicolor aplomb. While many people argue that it's not as smooth as the Spectrum port, in all honesty you'll probably struggle to notice any real difference. The Speccy port may get all the notoriety, but this is, in our opinion at least, the greatest 8-bit conversion of *Chase H.Q.* you can come by.





SPECTRUM

This port might be sorely lacking those glorious hues of the arcade game and CPC port, but it's still a silky smooth conversion. There isn't anything you could possibly do to this conversion – when you consider the limitations of the machine – to make it any better than it is. The gameplay is so on the money it's scary. The Spectrum port is bestowed with a fantastic animated ending, summing up perfectly the amount of effort and attention to detail that comes assailing from this port.





C64

Oh dear. It's like Ocean put all colour, power and resources into making a pretty game border and then suddenly realised it had to use what was left – seven minutes, three colours and 1K of memory – to make a computer game. Voilà, welcome to the C64 port of *Chase H.Q.*: drive a ridiculously sluggish and blocky-looking Porsche through a bland monochrome world. It's slow, looks like a crusty white dog turd – but coloured in with a green crayon – and plays a lot like one, too.





AMIGA

Given the shocking treatment of *Chase H.Q.* on the C64, you'd hope Ocean would try to rectify things by giving its beefier cousin a half-decent port. While the Amiga version is nowhere near as bad as the C64 port, the visuals look better but the gameplay is still very slow – you don't get any sense of speed, even with a nitro – and as such is a waste of a promising licence. Outsourced to Teque, who did the great *Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters,* but it was unable to wield similar magic this time.





MASTER SYSTEM & GAME GEAR

Things get off to a good start with this port. We get a nice colourful menu screen that mimics the start-up screen of the arcade game – the one with our heroes jumping into the front seats of their Porsche and then being briefed by the familiar Taito monitoring system. It's after this screen though that the promise of the game drops dramatically and we're given a *Rad Racer* rip-off. Flat, skinny, snaking tracks make the entire game feel twitchy and annoying.

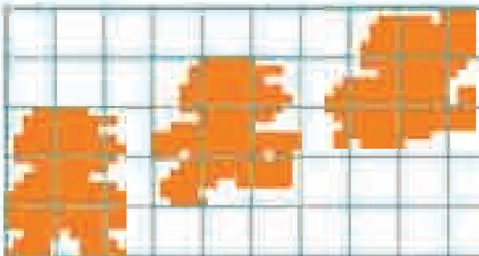




PC-ENGINE

Chase H.Q. on the PC-Engine is certainly a thing of beauty… that is until it actually starts moving. While it features some seriously impressive visuals and some beautiful looking stages, great throaty arcade speech and faithful level design, the jittery scrolling, pancake roads and iffy collision detection will soon put off all but the most ardent of fans of the arcade original. Sadly it's a close, but definitely cigar-lacking port for thr PC-Engine we're afraid.





PIXEL

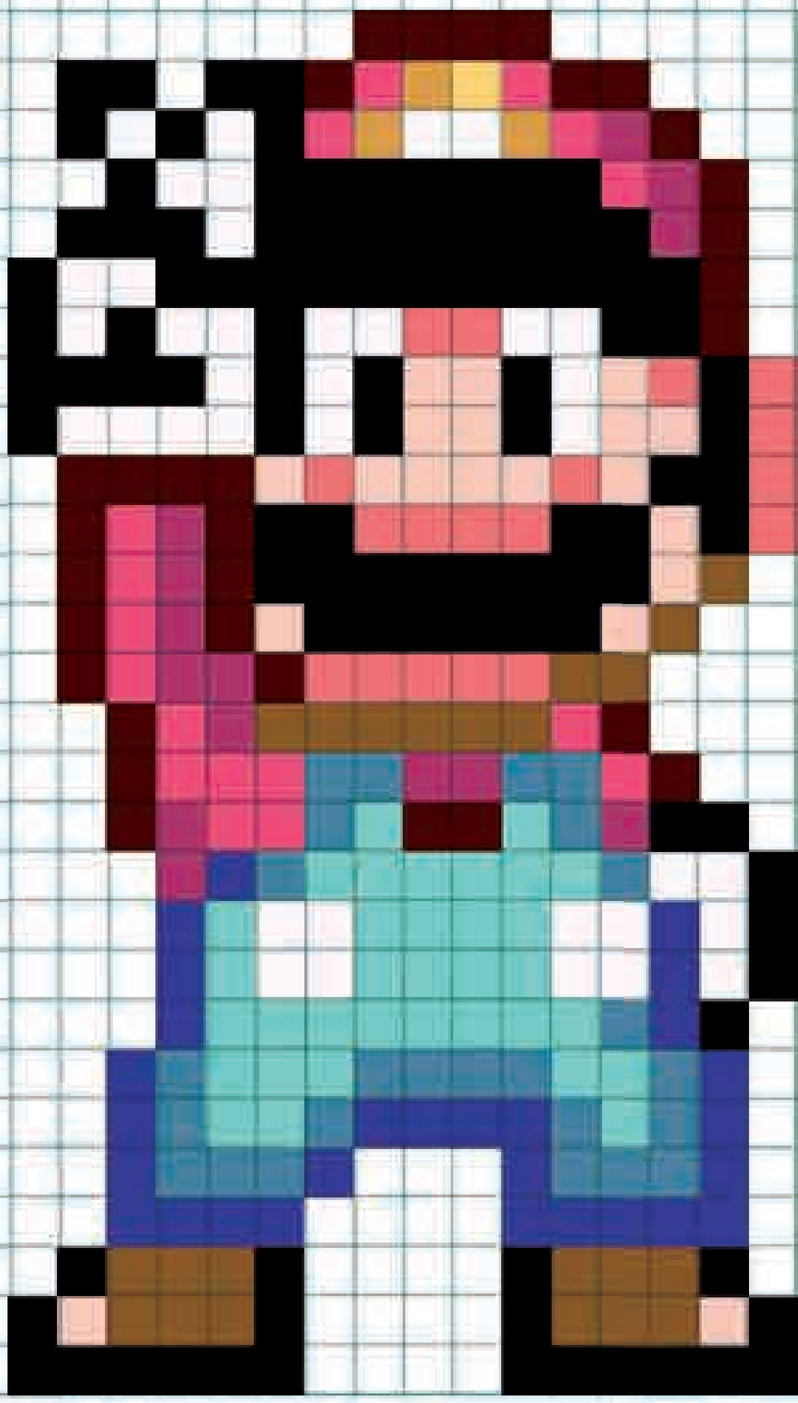
SPRITES ARE ONE OF THE GREATEST INVENTIONS OF THE 21ST CENTURY AND IN A NEW SERIES, RETRO GAMER LOOKS AT THE MANY CHARACTERS AND ENEMIES THAT MAKE CLASSIC GAMES SO MEMORABLE

With its abstract imagery, beautifully designed levels and stunning gameplay, *Super Mario World* remains among the upper echelons of 16-bit platforming. Hell, for many it's the epitome of 16-bit platforming and has never been bettered by any other 2D platformer since.

An initial launch title for Nintendo's SNES, *Super Mario World*, along with fellow launch games *F-Zero* and *Pilotwings* immediately set a new standard for 16-bit gaming and proved that Nintendo was more than capable of muscling in on a market that was primarily being dominated by the Amiga, Mega Drive and Atari ST.

While the SNES's powerful technology was able to inject Mario and Luigi with far more personality than they had ever boasted on the NES, Shigeru Miyamoto ensured that just as much care and attention was given to the many adversaries that the two Mario brothers faced. As a result, *Super Mario World* is filled with all manner of cute and cheerful foes, from the generic Koopa turtles of old to the new flying Paragoombas and Dino Torch.

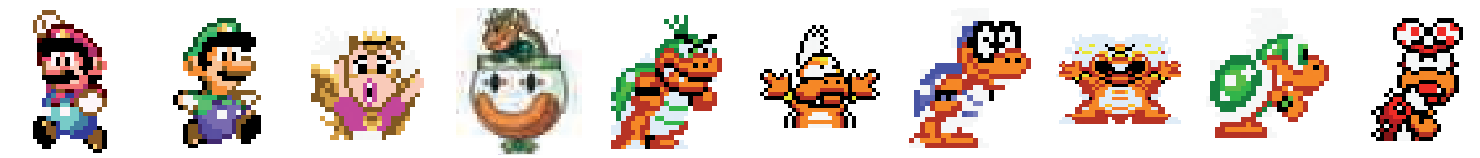
To get a true taste of *Super Mario World*'s exquisite sprite design, you need only look across to the following page…



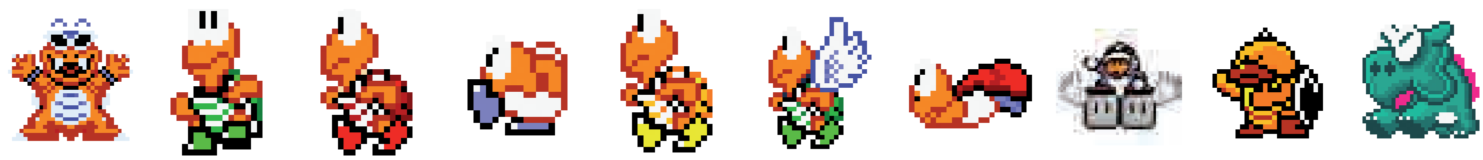
JUST THE FACTS

- Has sold over 20 million units in total.
- Is known as *Super Mario Bros 4* in Japan.
- Has been re-released on the Game Boy Advance, Virtual Console and as part of *Super Mario All-Stars* on the SNES.
- It was originally a pack-in game with American and European Super Nintendos.
- Yoshi makes his first appearance in *Super Mario World*.
- All the music in *Super Mario World* was composed on an electronic keyboard.
- A utility called Lunar Magic allows you to alter certain aspects of the *Super Mario World* ROM.
- *Super Mario World*'s direct sequel was *Super Mario's Wacky Worlds* and was supposed to appear on the CD-i.

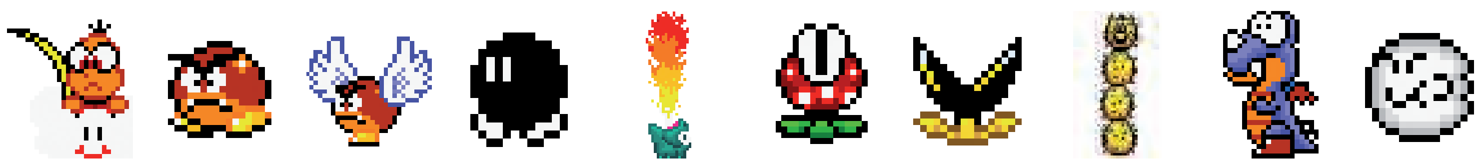
PERFECT



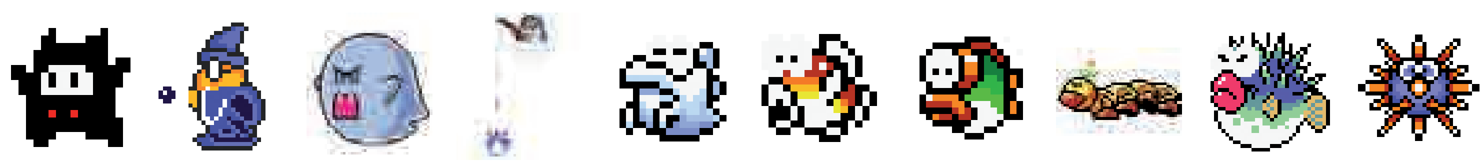
Mario First Appearance: *Donkey Kong*
Luigi First Appearance: *Mario Bros* or *Wrecking Crew*
Princess Peach First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Bowser First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Morton Koopa Jr First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Lemmy Koopa First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Iggy Koopa First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Ludwig Von Koopa First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Larry Koopa First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Wendy O Koopa First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*



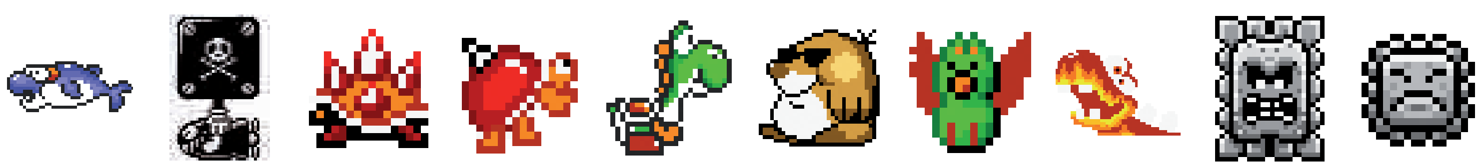
Roy Koopa First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Green Koopa Troopa First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Red Koopa Troopa First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Blue Koopa Troopa First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Yellow Koopa Troopa First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Flying Koopa Troopa First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Super Koopa Troopa First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Flying Hammer Bros First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Sumo Brothers First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Dino Rhino First Appearance: *Super Mario World*



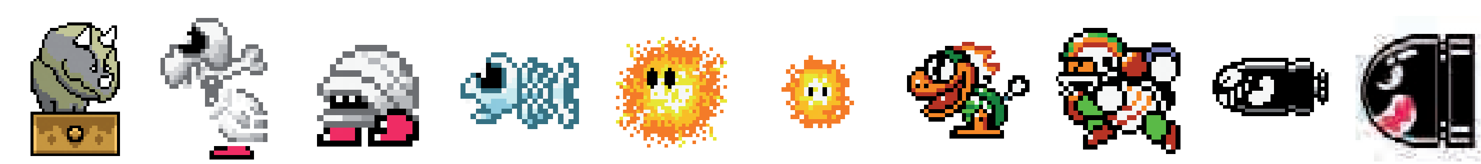
Lakitu First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Goomba First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Flying Goombas First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Bob-Omb First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 2*
Dino Torch First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Jumping Piranha Plants First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Muncher First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Pokey First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 2*
Rex First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Boo First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*



Ninji First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 2*
Magi-Koopa First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Big Boo First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Fishing Boo First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Eeries First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Cheep-Cheep First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Blurp First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Wiggler First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Porcu-Puffer First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Urchin First Appearance: *Super Mario World*



Dolphin First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Torpedo Ted First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Spiny First appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Spike Top First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Yoshi First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Mega Mole First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Swooper First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Blargg First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Thwomp First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Thwimp First Appearance: *Super Mario World*



Reznor First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Dry Bones First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros 3*
Bony Beetle First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Fishbone First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Hothead First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Lil' Sparky First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Mecha-Koopa First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Charging Chuck First Appearance: *Super Mario World*
Bullet Bill First Appearance: *Super Mario Bros*
Banzai Bill First Appearance: *Super Mario World*

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK

SHINY WILL ALWAYS BE REMEMBERED FOR MAKING A HERO OUT OF A WORM; BUT ITS ACHIEVEMENTS STRETCH FURTHER THAN THE IRREVERENT AND SURREAL. SHINY WAS A BREATH OF FRESH AIR AND PERHAPS THE FINEST 2D DEVELOPER TO COME OUT OF THE WEST… FROM MIKRO-GEN TO MDK, STUART HUNT TALKS TO DAVID PERRY ABOUT THE HISTORY OF SHINY

Shiny Entertainment



Shiny founder David Perry.

While England had come to fully embrace the computer age, Northern Ireland, not by choice, was trailing slightly behind. Belfast, during the Seventies, was in a time of unrest. Conflict was rife – on the streets and inside parliament – and its economy was unsteady. In a bid to try to cushion the uneasy economic climate of the time, the British Government invested money into Northern Ireland's education sector.

Born in 1967, Shiny founder David Perry grew up in the towns of Templepatrick and Donegore, in County Antrim. He attended the Templepatrick Primary School before going on to study at the Methodist College Belfast. When David was 15, the Methodist College had been on the receiving end of a national grant and would invest the money in computer equipment.

"There wasn't a single person in the building who knew what to do with the money," recalls David. "There was this guy called Richard Naylor, who ended up becoming head of the whole computer department, and he set up this whole infrastructure and bought lots of computers. We had computers coming out of our ears, and the teachers really didn't know how to use them. It almost became a competition between the students and teachers to see who could learn to use them first."

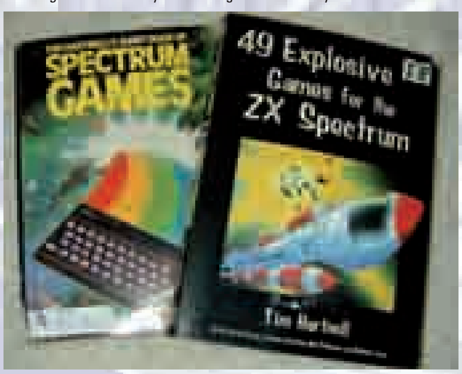
The school had acquired everything from business computers like the Research Machines 380Z to Acorn Atoms, ZX81s and BBC Micros, but it was the short-lived ZX80 add-on – the ZX81 – that really piqued David's interest.

"After being introduced to the ZX81 at school, I asked my mother if she would buy me one, which she did, and I started playing around with it," David remembers.

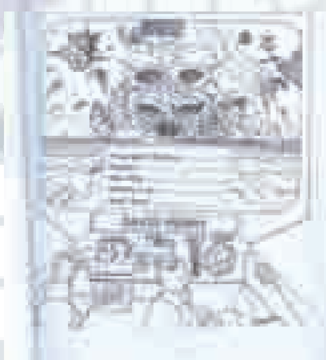
"Very quickly you learn that when you're learning BASIC you can actually take control of the computer. You might be writing the world's worst videogames but they're cool



Savage's box art clearly shows the game's three very different levels.



David's programming career began in these books.



Written, not illustrated, by David. We think.

SHINY INSTANT EXPERT

Shiny's name was based on the REM song *Shiny Happy People* as it was playing on the radio at the time the company was formed.

David is six feet eight inches tall; he's even taller than Phil Harrison (they've checked).

In these old days, to hack your code into a new piece of gaming hardware you didn't know (from a business machine that didn't have a chance of connecting to it), you would simply make a cable that simulated someone waggling the joystick (incredibly fast) and then handwrite a bit of code at the other end that would decode what the joystick seemed to be doing, then store that in memory. So basically one computer (that you program and make graphics on) would wiggle the joystick until the code it wanted to transmit over would end up in the destination games machine. Painfully slow, but plenty of games were made that way!

Edge magazine made a framed special edition *Edge* cover once for Shiny. "It was on our wall the entire life of the company," admits David. It was Issue 0, with Earthworm Jim on the cover. It was a 3D model of Jim made by Softimage, who was a big fan of the game.

In the Earthworm *Jim* animated series, Jim was voiced by none other than Dan Castellaneta – who's more commonly known for voicing everyone's favourite mustard face, Homer Simpson. The show aired for a total of two seasons.

An Earthworm Jim movie was also considered after David received a call from a director from the Jim Henson Company. The director was interested in doing a 'puppet' movie with the super-powered annelid in the fore. Sadly the deal was quashed by Universal, who owned the rights of Earthworm Jim.

David has developed a total of 32 games in his career, and was lead programmer on 24 of them.

It's estimated that David's games have yielded over three quarters of a billion dollars in sales.

Through his flair for bringing to market some of the most impressive licensed videogames ever released, David's reputation has seen him work alongside Hollywood's elite, including legendary film producer Joel Silver and the directors, the Wachowski Brothers.

to you because you made them, and that's when it gets a little addictive. These were the days when everything was black and white. There were no real graphics; you would play as the letter A, or letter V, so you didn't require any artistic skills, and there was no real need for music skills – only when the BBC Micro really got going did that start to pick up. I guess the point I'm trying to make is that the barrier to entry was surprisingly low, you could make a game out of almost anything."

David found it very difficult to purchase games for his ZX81, so instead found enjoyment from inputting the program listings inside of stapled computer magazines. Over time his programming skills grew, and, after sending one of his programs into the National ZX80/81 Users Club magazine, David caught the eye of Tim Hartnell.

"I got really excited about that, because I'm at school and here I am featured in the magazine," he remembers. "So I sent them more of my programs and finally one day they sent me a cheque in the mail for £450. I nearly fell off my chair. I didn't ask them for any money, I wasn't doing it for the money; I didn't even have a bank account to put the money into. And you can imagine the penny dropping because I was like, 'Hold on a second, if I can earn £450 just mucking around, what if I was really focused on this.' And that's when I started programming like crazy."

Tim Hartnell was the editor of the magazine and went on to become a significant author in the field of ZX81 and Spectrum. Impressed by David's tenacity and programming talents, Tim approached David and asked him for his assistance with a book he was compiling. David agreed, and what began as contributing a few pages of programming code to his latest tome soon led to David writing an entire chapter. After the book was published Tim asked David whether he'd like to write another book, this time by himself. He did, and the book, *Astounding Arcade Games For Your Spectrum + & Spectrum*, would go on to sell around 8,000 copies.

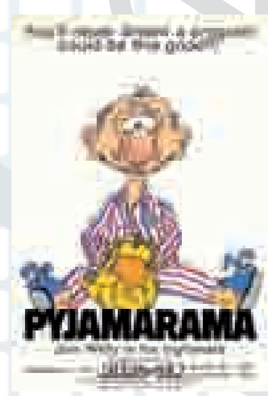
In the book, David had included a BASIC game called *Drak Maze*. It was a lengthy program which, in retrospect, David admits was a little too laborious to expect anyone to sit down and type out. David sent a copy of *Drak Maze* to Mikro-Gen (a UK-based game publisher), and the publisher immediately asked David whether he'd be interested in upping sticks and joining the company. He was still just 17.

"I hadn't finished my degree or anything," he recalls. "And my teachers were a little concerned. I guess it was like saying you're going to leave school to become a professional skateboarder. At that time the videogame industry didn't really exist as a career choice. It certainly wasn't something the academic world was appreciating at that time. It was a tough decision but I decided I was going to do it, and I accepted the offer of just £3,500 a year and moved to England. So I joined Mikro-Gen, and I actually thought I was a better programmer than I turned out to be. I was sharing this office with professional programmers and, being self taught, I remember panic setting in and thinking, 'God, I really don't know how to write a 'professional' game and now I really need to make one'."

The first hurdle that David needed to overcome was learning how to take the skills that he'd acquired from programming BASIC in his bedroom and apply them to Z80 assembly language. He fumbled his way through with his first Mikro-Gen game: the unreleased, *Potholing Pete*.

David reveals that *Potholing Pete* was a platformer starring a little character with a big hard hat. The premise of the game saw your character, Pete, travel underground and the action would play out inside a variety of cavernous levels.

"It was really more of a test to see if I could get sprites going and everything else, and I did," David explains. "But I guess the point of the mechanics, of laying out all the



An iconic piece of 8-bit retro art.





Supremacy was David's first stab at the strategy genre, and brilliant it was, too.

levels and making it flow well was really where the rubber meets the road."

As David was working on *Potholing Pete*, Mikro-Gen was planning the sequel to its successful platformer, *Automania*. *Pyjamarama* saw returning protagonist Wally Week switch from being a scatterbrained mechanic to someone trying to escape the confines of a colourful night terror. The lead programmer on *Pyjamarama* was Chris Hinsley, and David was tasked with taking Chris's Spectrum code and trying to get it working on the Amstrad. "Chris was a great programmer, and when I got to look in his code that really changed everything for me," says David. "Finally getting to work with professional code was like someone giving you the keys to a sports car, it all gets very dangerous from that point on, so you either have lots of fun, or die!"

David succeeded in getting *Pyjamarama* to run on the machine, through hacked hardware to get the game code into the machine. The first review for the game was 10/10, David breathed a sigh of relief and the game proved to be yet another success for Mikro-Gen. After *Pyjamarama*'s release, Chris then went on to make *Everyone's A Wally*, and David worked on a peculiar spin-off *Wally* game entitled *Herbert's Dummy Run*.

After *Everyone's A Wally*, Chris Hinsley's next project was to work on the Spectrum game *Battle Of The Planets* (he wanted to learn 3D), and the *Wally* series was handed over to David. His response was to create what many still herald as the best game in the series: *Three Weeks In Paradise*.

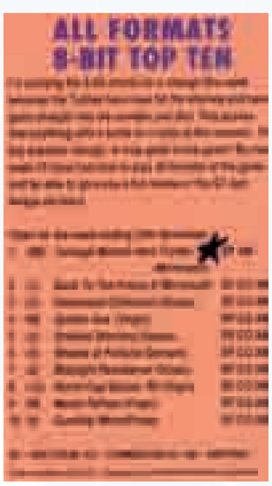
"*Three Weeks In Paradise* was where things really started to get really interesting for me because the games were selling very well and Mikro-Gen was making a lot of money – almost to the point where we were starting to get a little cocky. This is when we decided to make our own hardware and where the idea for the Mikro Plus came from," recalls David.

The Mikro Plus proved a disaster for Mikro-Gen, costing the company many thousands of pounds. Working like a RAM expansion pack when it was hooked up to the Spectrum, the Mikro Plus made it possible to eke an extra 16K worth of storage space on the normal 48K machine. Despite its quick collapse in the market, David is quick to jump to the custom cartridge's defence, praising its creator, Andy Laurie, for having the foresight and ability to build such an elegant yet simple hardware design, without any help.

"The Mikro Plus was a very clever piece of electronics," says David. "Andy found a way to swap out the Spectrum ROM – I don't know how he ever worked it out, because back in those days there was no manual, they just tinkered around until they found out how to do it. He basically overlaid the official Spectrum ROM chip with an EPROM chip (that we could burn game code onto), so we suddenly had more storage memory than anyone else in the business. If you think about it, it was a pretty stunning concept at the time. You've got space to make a 48K game and that's what everyone's programming with, but we get an extra 16K that no one else was getting."

What should have been a success story, securing Mikro-Gen continued prominence in the Spectrum market, would have the adverse affect. Two games were planned to utilise the Mikro Plus technology; a colourful-looking adventure game called *Shadow Of The Unicorn*, and *Three Weeks In Paradise*. David recounts the story.

"So we decided to put two games onto this new machine. *Shadow Of The Unicorn* shipped first. It went out there and it died. Like corporately, it was a disaster, retailers were upset, so much so that Mikro-Gen couldn't afford to do a second game using the technology. The technology was basically destroyed by one game. As a result I was sitting there with a version of *Three Weeks In Paradise* far too big to fit in a normal Spectrum," David continues. "But that proved to be a really useful learning curve for me. I soon learned that cherry-picking (over-designing) is actually a good way to improve your game. Basically, we


ALL FORMATS 8-BIT TOP TEN

It's true, anything with a turtle in it does sell.

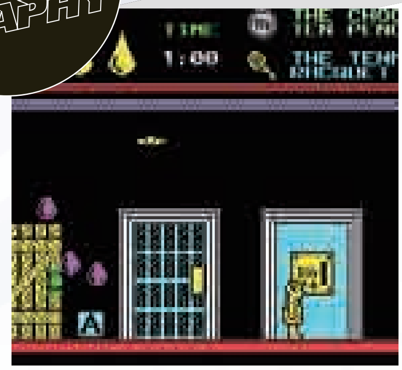


Trantor is an office favourite – big guns, big graphics and a great story.



Beyond The Ice Palace, David's homage to *Ghosts 'N Goblins*, perhaps? Coincidentally also published by Elite.

THE DAVE-O-GRAPHY



Herbert's Dummy Run

Herbert's Dummy Run was unfairly lambasted by many magazines of its day, with many reviewers declaring it the weakest of the five games in the *Wally* series. In hindsight, the criticism it received was a little unjust. *Herbert's Dummy Run* featured some superbly colourful, and detailed, visuals. And all of the many items that appeared in the game could be easily distinguished, with everything looking like it should. The game also boasts some inventive item-based puzzles, neat set pieces and even a *Breakout*-style mini-game (the blinkered muppets).



Three Weeks In Paradise

Released on two versions – a 48K version and spruced up 128K port – *Three Weeks In Paradise* was the final exploit for Mikro-Gen's mascot, Wally Week, and charts our intrepid hero as he embarks on the world's most dangerous busman's holiday. *Three Weeks In Paradise* quickly turned into three seconds for poor-old Wally, as his family were kidnapped by a hostile band of tribesmen in a remote chipper-looking paradise. Wally had to rely on his cunning, and love for the double entendre, to crack the various puzzles and save his family from getting a roasting.



Great Gurianos

Taito's *Great Gurianos* was an unusual, somewhat clunky take on the side-scrolling fighting genre. Playing a chunky gladiator-type character, you had to approach your opponents by negotiating a peril-laden tunnel loaded with traps, arrows and bats. To protect yourself you had to parry a continuous barrage of death with a rickety shield before engaging various gladiators in a one-on-one fight to the death. (Think *Tunnel B1* meets *Barbarian*). Despite being unpopular in arcades, *Great Gurianos* was nonetheless a novel take on the fighting genre.

were left to sift through the game and take out the bits that weren't so good. As a result I think we ended up with something better than we would have, had we shipped *Three Weeks In Paradise* without the hardware."

Shortly after the release of *Three Weeks In Paradise*, Sir Clive Sinclair announced the release of the 128K Spectrum. Sitting with one of the biggest Spectrum games, as far as memory goes, David was able to port *Three Weeks In Paradise* on to the Spectrum 128 incredibly quickly, in an enhanced form, with extra screens and even smoother gameplay. "I was excited about meeting Sir Clive, as I pretty much owed my career to his machines," David remembers.

As the story unfurls, David left Mikro-Gen so that he could start up his own coding shop, which he ran from his home. The first job he landed was to work on the Spectrum port of *Ikari Warriors* for Elite, but he admits that he never got to finish it. Elite had peculiarly sourced the job of porting the game on to the Spectrum to two coders; David Perry and David Shea. But it was Shea's code that Elite eventually selected. Consequently, during *Ikari*'s development, David was reassigned to work on another game. A *Ghosts 'N Goblins*-style platformer called *Beyond The Ice Palace*, a project that gave David his first taste of managing people.

"Elite wanted *Beyond The Ice Palace* in all formats so I ended up hiring in friends to handle the workload," David recalls. "But being young and naive it was tough running around for all those different people. I soon realised that it was *way* more fun working for yourself than having to manage people, so I soon ended up going back to do my own stuff again."

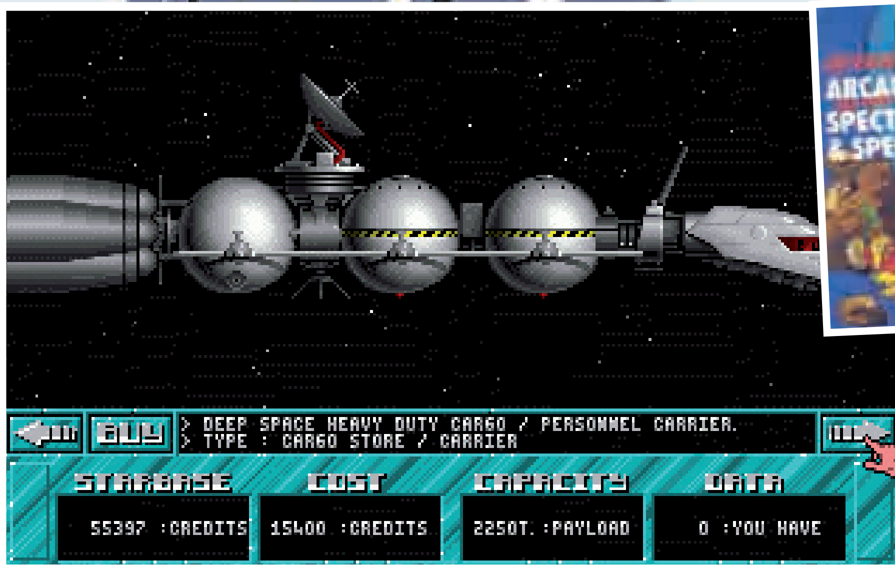
The next project David worked on was the port of the arcade game *Great Gurianos* (aka *Gladiator*) for Elite. *Great Gurianos* featured a realistic combat and damage system – one hit could kill, but, as David admits, his home port possessed a rather large flaw.

"It took so long for the arcade machine to arrive that I'd already finished *Great Gurianos* by the time it showed up," David recalls. "I programmed the game and then found I had run out of memory; I didn't have any room to add an end sequence. So I made the final boss impossible to beat, which is programming and game design sacrilege, but I remember chuckling to myself as I did it. That kind of shows you how loose everything was back in those days. For me *Great Gurianos* was a turning point. That's when I realised I had to get my shit together and become more professional. And that's when I hooked up with Probe Software."

At the time that David met up with Probe Software, the company had just acquired the *OutRun* licence. David was impressed with the company's professionalism and Probe seemed interested in David's programming background. During the meeting, Probe showed David a demo of *Trantor: The Last Stormtrooper* running on the Spectrum, and David rakishly mentioned that he could get the thing running on the Amstrad. Within 24 hours he had done just that. Impressed, Probe offered David a job immediately and put him to work on finishing his Amstrad port of *Trantor: The Last Stormtrooper*.

"Then what happened was that the artist of that project, Nick Bruty – who later turned out to be the lead artist on *MDK* and everything else – approached me with some more artwork and as a result I kind of pulled ahead of the Spectrum programmer. Consequently, we actually ended up shipping the Amstrad version first," David explains.

DEVELOPER LOOKBACK







The inlay card to Wally's *Pyjamarama* tries to explain and flesh out the madness.

Trantor marked the beginning of David and Nick's relationship; a working partnership that culminated in Shiny Entertainment as the pair continued to work together on further projects at Probe.

"At that time we were working on some fun games. We worked on *Smash TV*, *Savage* and *Dan Dare III* for Virgin. But *Dan Dare III* was the game that really opened the door to Virgin for us," David admits.

Dan Dare III began life as another game all together, one that he and Nick had been working on for Probe called '*Crazy Jet Racer*'. During its development David recalls that *Computer & Video Games* magazine would run an early preview on the game before it came to release, but after the *Dan Dare* deal landed on the pair's lap they also swapped the game's protagonist for Dan Dare.

After that they worked on a game called *Extreme* for a company called Digital Integration, "That was our last game on the Spectrum," says David. "It was us trying to show what you could do using all of the routines that we had made for all our games. And that didn't make it a better game by the way, because we had a gigantic robot walking sequence just to show that we could do line draws and full-screen effects. We both relished the challenge of discovering new techniques and learning to push the hardware, so when the Amiga came along we were keen to get new hardware to experiment with, and see if we could get something running on it," says David.

"For whatever reason, at the time, I was playing around trying to draw circles," David remembers. "I soon found that if I ran them in a sequence I could make them look like stars rotating in 3D. It was a bit of a cheat but it looked like a little universe, so we then thought what if we have one guy positioned at the top of the screen and another at the bottom, and what if they could take over each other's planets and overthrow them? Then we wondered how you could fly between planets and the obvious answer was spacecrafts, and then later we thought about adding troops. We just continually got into these 'what if?' conversations and that's how we ended up making *Supremacy*."

At the dawn of the Nineties the Sega Mega Drive was released in the UK, and it seemed that Europe was finally sauntering towards console gaming. The Mega Drive is the machine that David is most synonymous with. But it was a programmer and hardware relationship that got off to a rocky start.

"We didn't have any tools, the manual was in Japanese and we knew it was going to be painful," he recalls. "We literally just struggled our way through. The first game we did for the machine was *The Terminator*. It was written so horribly because we had nothing to work with. But actually, by misreading the manual (because it was in Japanese), I found a way to double the throughput on the Mega Drive, and I was moving larger amounts of data faster than you were supposed to. The hardware wasn't supposed to be able to handle that, but it did, and anybody who was following the rules correctly wouldn't have tried it. And when I was doing *Aladdin*, *Cool Spot* and *Earthworm Jim*, I was taking full advantage of that."

Seeking a producer for *The Terminator*, David and Nick would be introduced to Neil Young, and his unique approach to producing immediately impressed David. "Neil blew me away as a producer," he admits. "He was just phenomenal. He was one of the first producers that would actually sit down, look at the game and say, 'What if you did it this way?', and it would be better than it was before. So imagine a creative producer, someone not trying to just ship the product but trying to make the best product possible, and having the



An unusual but rather memorable advert for *Savage*.

SHINY TIMELINE 1980-1991

1980 DAVID'S MUM BUYS HIM A ZX81, SETTING THE WHEELS IN MOTION FOR HIS PROLIFIC PROGRAMMING CAREER.

1981 WITH COMPUTER GAMES A RARE COMMODITY IN DAVID'S HOME TOWNS OF DONEGORE AND TEMPLEPATRICK, HE'S FORCED TO PUNCH OUT PROGRAM CODES INSIDE OLD COMPUTER MAGAZINES.

1982 DAVID GETS HIS FIRST PAID GIG AFTER ONE OF HIS PROGRAMS IS PRINTED INSIDE A ZX81 COMPUTER MAGAZINE; HE'S PAID £450 POUNDS FOR HIS EFFORTS.

1983 DAVID WRITES HIS FIRST PROGRAMMING BOOK: IT GOES ON TO SELL 8,000 COPIES.

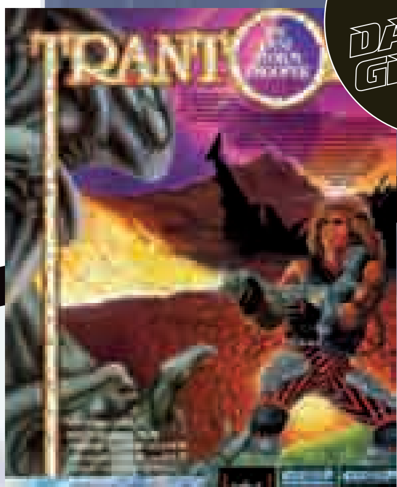
1984 DAVID SENDS UK PUBLISHER MIKRO-GEN A COPY OF HIS GAME, DRAK MAZE. IMPRESSED BY HIS EFFORTS, THEY OFFER HIM A JOB AS A PROGRAMMER.

1984 DAVE PERRY AND NICK BRUTY MEET AT PROBE SOFTWARE WHILE WORKING TOGETHER ON TRANTOR: THE LAST STORMTROOPER.

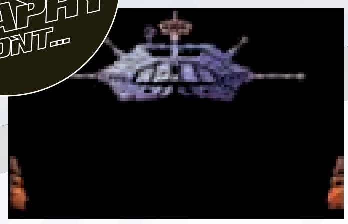
1987 DAVID AND NICK RELEASE DAN DARE III, WHICH CATCHES THE EYE OF VIRGIN INTERACTIVE.

1991 THEY CONTINUE TO CREATE A SLEW OF HITS FOR VIRGIN, INCLUDING SUPREMACY AND THE TERMINATOR – DAVID'S FIRST MEGA DRIVE GAME.

1991 DAVID IS OFFERED A JOB BY VIRGIN INTERACTIVE TO MOVE TO AMERICA AND ASSIST THE COMPANY IN ITS US GAMING DIVISION.



THE DAVE-O-GRAPHY CONT...



Trantor: The Last Stormtrooper

A gloomy, atmospheric and fantastically fleshed-out plot would find Trantor and his men sent on a mission to recover stolen missile plans from a remote hostile alien planet. After docking into the unknown, his ship blows up, killing Trantor's crew, and so, fully explaining the game's title. Left alone to complete his mission, Trantor is left thinking that things couldn't get any worse – well, that's before he remembers that he's been fitted with a ticking body bomb. Frequently having to stop at docking stations to reset your detonator, *Trantor* is a fantastic, and frantic, run-'n'-gun platformer that cleverly forces you to think on your back feet.



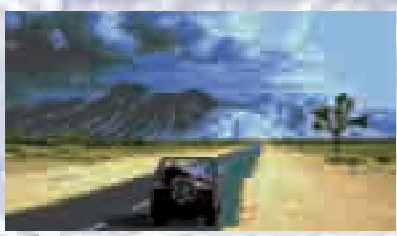
Savage

David admits that *Savage* was three games in one. To handle its huge size and amazing visuals, he had to make *Savage* multi-load so the Speccy could dedicate all of its processing power to each stage. The 3D section was made in homage to *3D Deathchase*. "We weren't just going to rip them off and make the same thing," says David. "We did bigger objects coming at you; which was a mistake because you don't get the same kind of throughput. The colour worked on a grid on the Speccy, and so unless everything moved eight pixels at a time there would be colour issues. So we came up with all sorts of tricks to try to smooth that out.



The Terminator

David's first title for Sega's Mega Drive plays it tremendously close to the film upon which it's based. Making full use of the extra throughput that David would tease from the Mega Drive, *The Terminator* stood out as one of the best-looking Mega Drive titles of its day. With photorealistic graphics and a fantastic cinematic soundtrack, its 'finish it in a solitary life' gameplay – forcing you to familiarise yourself with the level layout and missions – held an incredibly compulsive draw. Unfortunately, that meant when you finally managed to finish the game, it could be walked with both hands tied behind your back.



"WE WORKED ON SMASH TV, SAVAGE AND DAN DARE III. BUT DAN DARE III WAS THE GAME THAT OPENED THE DOOR TO VIRGIN FOR US"

creative opinions to back that up. That's what defined him."

Sticking closely to the events of the film, *The Terminator* stood out among other Mega Drive titles due to its striking photorealistic graphics. While you'd be forgiven for thinking that Orion Pictures had flown David, Nick and Neil over to the set to help them achieve such dazzling visual effects, the reality was a lot less glamorous.

"So we decided that we wanted to be the first game on the Genesis with photorealistic graphics and we said to ourselves, 'how could you do that?' And of course, the answer was to take a photograph, scan the photo, cut the background out, make a sprite and put the sprite into the game, as, sadly, there were no digital cameras in those days," David explains. "And so there we were standing in my mother's backyard. Nick is taking the photographs and Neil and I played the guys in the game. Neil had a trench coat, to play the role of Kyle Reese, and I was wearing one of my mother's jackets and playing the bad guys. Then we needed guns. Nowadays, you'd hire an armourer who would bring all kinds of guns and weapons to your set. In those days we were inside a shed, looking for anything gun-shaped. The pictures are really funny, and the sprites are lo-res, so you can't really tell, but I'm actually using a toilet plunger."

Following the release of *The Terminator*, Virgin Interactive asked David to fly over to America to help assist the company's development division. While his accepting of the job clearly proved to be the right decision – one that David admits he probably would have done a lot sooner in hindsight – the considered, analytic side of him seems to shudder at the thought of being so impulsive and not taking the time to fully weigh up the massive ask.

"You know when you're young you're naive, right? You never really put any thought into it, so I just got into a plane and flew out there, and didn't think twice about it," David recalls. "I literally put all my stuff inside two big chests. I bought them to put all my computers, all my discs, everything in these two chests, but then it turned out that I could only really fill up one with all my computer belongings. So I arrived at Los Angeles airport, and they're looking at me with these chests and they're like, 'What do you think you're doing? What's all this stuff?' And the guy opened up my case, but he opened up the wrong one. Inside were all various items including kites and juggling sticks. Slightly bemused, he was like, 'Okay, fine, on you go'."

And so with David landing into more clement surroundings, it's here we end the first part of our Shiny origin story. Tales of annelids in spacesuits and Jim Dandy searching for Flange Orbits are still waiting to be told.







Paperboy 2 was another early effort from David. Although it's not one of his best...



With a few pence in your pocket, the sneaky pre-teen peak of the *Rambo* movie tape still pulsating through your head and taste buds dancing merrily through a myriad of bitter sweets from the penny tray, pumping lead into waves of enemies like a sour-faced Sylvester Stallone would most likely have proved too much for anti-fun campaigner Mary Whitehouse in the mid-Eighties.

For there we were, packing holiday resorts by the brown seas of Britain pretending to be a highly trained crack jungle fighter called Super Joe on a mission to annihilate his foes and rescue some captives, battling through an impregnable enemy base with little more than an infinite-round machine gun and a few lob-worthy hand grenades.

Created by Capcom's Tokuro Fujiwara (*Ghosts 'N Goblins*, *Mega Man*), *Commando* dropped you alone behind enemy lines and forced you to battle against entire squadrons, hidden behind shelters or coming straight at you in this vertically scrolling, tough-nut, heart-in-mouth, fist-pounding-on-arcade-machine title awash with deafening noise and eye-candy graphics. It was all too much for **RG** civvy David Crookes.



Super Joe

Super Joe was able to fire his sub-machine gun in eight directions yet throw hand grenades in only one – straight up. You've got to feel sorry for this dude, for he's all alone and there are no power-ups to help him bash the enemy.



Captives

Captives have, by their very nature, a knack of getting caught and, more importantly, in your way. But you have to ensure that you grab these prisoners of war as they cavort about the screen in the clutches of the enemy. They must be more careful in future.



Guerrillas

***Commando*'s guerrillas aren't in the mist, they're right out there, in their droves. In your face, shooting from on high, driving trucks, in the dirt, on the road… It'd be a stroll in a dusty park without these gun-toting monkeys sent out by their coward of an officer.**

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



Come and have a go…

It was a chance to prove you were hard enough not only to mow down lots of stupid enemy soldiers (if these guys had tactical sense, they'd have quickly surrounded Super Joe and turned him into a human tea bag), but also to gather the stamina to get through the near-identical levels in one piece. With a game lacking power-ups and variety, classic status should surely be shot down in the flames of one of Joe's grenades. Yet it was so influential, the catalyst for games such as *Ikari Warriors* and *Who Dares Wins*, which had similar controls, mechanics and level design. Let down in the home computer versions, maybe, but a classic, for sure.

BEST CHARACTER



Superman

Or Super Joe. Still, he was a super man, made of strong stuff and the least you could do was ensure you judged enemy positions and found the right places to hide at the right time while getting out of the way of the flying bullets. In real life, we'd be more likely to go hide in a bush and wait until dark before fleeing with our solitary life intact but there was no chance of that here. Super Joe was blessed with more than one life, and so he was at an advantage, but if he could have mastered throwing a grenade in directions other than straight up, he'd have been a cool soldier to have alongside you in a battle.

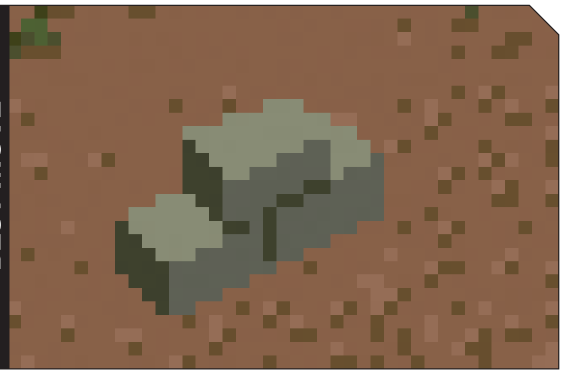
BEST BOSS



The guerillas

The enemy soldiers may look the same and they may be fairly easy to dispatch, but their sheer numbers overwhelm the solitary figure that is Joe to the point where your nerves are soon shattered and your thumbs bruised. Yet a 'one more go' factor comes into play and eventually you reach the end of a level. This is where your biggest test comes into play. There is no big boss to shoot (the cowardly leading officer just runs away, but you can shoot him in the back if you wish). Instead you end up with a screen full of foes with nowhere to hide. And your mind works overtime trying to engage your hands into killing them all.

BEST MOVE



Grenades, grenades, grenades

Much of the action in *Commando* is simply a case of hitting fire and spraying your bullets around, but the grenades are brilliant weapons and some of your best moves are created with the swift use of them. They help clear obstacles and blow up the opposition's soldiers. They buy you a few extra seconds that would otherwise be spent shooting. And they help get around the fact that the jungle is sparse with hardly a tree in this drab setting to hide behind – it's a case of shoot, throw, and just get the hell up that screen as fast as you possibly can without spinning yourself into an early grave.

BEST STAGE



Later levels

It's fair to say there's no single standout level. But the more you advance, the more you have to contend with. You must watch out for the enemy trucks that try to run you over and keep an eye on Super Joe as you pass under the bridge otherwise you suffer attacks from above. The further in you get, the more you realise that it's about dodging bullets and grenades, avoiding rivers and ponds, using any trees or walls for cover and destroying enemy leaders and their HQs. The best stage? It has to be the sheer relief at finishing the game. So few will have done it. Fewer still will have done it without pushing themselves close to a nervous breakdown.

STANDOUT MOMENT



The feeling

When you played *Commando* for the first time, it felt so right. Given that it went on to standardise everything that this genre would offer in the games which followed, it seems developers thought so, too. And that's the standout moment. It's less of a particular situation – although the end-of-level wave gave you a real heart-sinking feeling – and more of a defining moment. It was the realisation that you could be gung-ho and macho with simple controls that placed the emphasis on the game rather than figuring out what button to press when. You just notice the speed and the relentless pacing, the one-hit kills and the relief of the explosions.

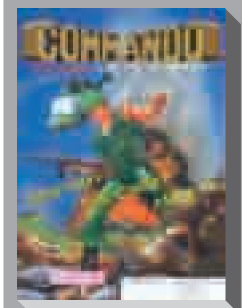
What the mags said… ages ago

C&VG, August 1985
"Movement is smooth and the graphics are well defined in a cartoon style, though they are not particularly colourful."

Zzap!64, February 1986 – 77%
"The scrolling backdrops are great, but some of the sprites seem prone to epileptic attacks and on occasions they even disappear."

What we think

Yup. It tapped into the whole *Rambo*-esque feeling of the Eighties (the game was originally known as *Senjou No Ookami* – or 'Battlefield Of The Wolf' – and was re-titled *Commando* to possibly tie-in with the Arnold Schwarzenegger movie in the same year) and it's still a top run-'n'-gun game today.



IN THE KNOW

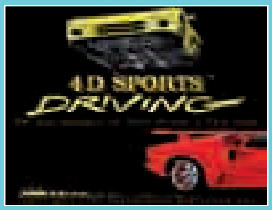
- **PLATFORM:** ARCADE
- **DEVELOPER:** CAPCOM
- **PUBLISHER:** NIHON BUSSAN
- **RELEASED:** 1985
- **GENRE:** RUN-'N'-GUN
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £50+

THE MAKING OF STUNTS (4D SPORTS DRIVING)



As a mixture of arcade inspiration and the realisation that demolition derby cars spend most of their time driving in the wrong direction, Stunts was the product of fortunate restraint, mistakes and circumstance. Tim Henderson grew up believing that car brakes were functional while airborne…

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** BRØDERBUND/ MINDSCAPE
» **DEVELOPER:** DISTINCTIVE SOFTWARE, INC
» **RELEASED:** 1990
» **PLATFORMS:** PC
» **GENRE:** STUNT DRIVING
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+

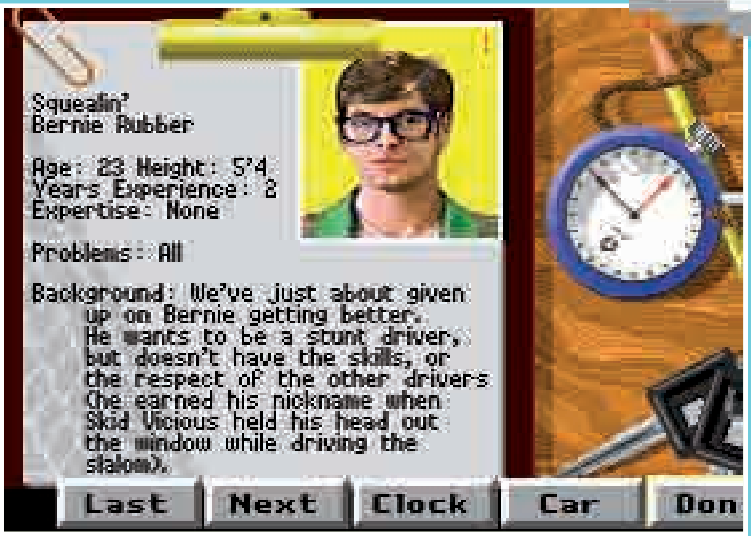
Showing painful proof that copyrights and properties have a history in gaming that seeps further back than the beginning of the PlayStation era, *Stunts* wasn't released under its original name in this land. We instead got something less concise – something at once wordier and somehow tied to an unrelated brand: "Brøderbund was the publisher in the USA and the USA alone," explains designer and programmer, Kevin P Pickell. "Distinctive Software, Inc were looking for publishers in different territories, and since Brøderbund had the name *Stunts* the game needed a different name for those territories. At the time we'd done a game called *4D Sports Boxing*, so I think that's where the European name – *4D Sports Driving* – came from."

The game itself, of course, had absolutely nothing in common with any boxing (or tennis, as may be the case) release from DSI or any other developer. Rather, it bore only the most insignificant of differences with its American Siamese twin – the release was based on version 1.1 of *Stunts*, and featured a few minor tweaks. It was a racing game that would embrace the dangers of early polygon graphics, to say nothing of the in-game dangers those triangles were absolutely integral in creating.

Polygons were no cakewalk in 1990, and Kevin is quick to highlight the sort of complications and compromises he had to work with throughout development. "Texture rendering was way too slow at the time, so we used a general single-colour convex polygon renderer," explains Kevin. "The hardest part was getting the polygons rendered fast enough back before graphics cards did that for you; all the polygon code was being run by the CPU." The end result looked clunky, but offered amazing driving freedom where players could easily swing onto the flat grass and deviate from the actual tracks – a sign, perhaps, of the title's true beginnings.

"In fact, it actually started out as a smash-up derby game in an arena," Kevin recalls, picking at a scab implying that everyone at DSI secretly wanted to put a clod of motors





» Bernie was the token rubbish driver, and aware of it in every way. Although he never expected to win at anything, this only made it worse when he actually did.



"THE TRACK EDITOR WAS THE BREAD, BUTTER AND CHOCOLATE SPREAD OF STUNTS' APPEAL, AND IT LENT THE GAME A LOT OF LONG-TERM ROBUSTNESS"

through the grinder. "But the cars mainly drive backwards in demolition derbies. It's very hard to execute a 3D game where you are primarily driving in reverse, so eventually it evolved to become *Stunts*."

Such a comment implies a surprising attention to authenticity for a game that would excel at providing impossible thrills, although the influence of Atari's arcade title, *Hard Drivin'*, is hard to pass by. Atari's original classic gave the option of surviving a stunt course, or simply driving fast and trying not to meet death by traffic, and no prizes for guessing which aspect *Stunts* took its inspirational cue from. "At the time, there was no way we could be as good as that game," Kevin elaborates, recalling a period when it was arcade hardware that led the market in terms of sheer visual oomph. "We just didn't have the sort of horsepower that a dedicated arcade machine had. What we could do, though, was include a track editor that would set us apart and make our game a very different experience to an arcade title."

Indeed, the track editor was the bread, butter and chocolate spread of much of *Stunts*' appeal, and was something that lent the game a surprising amount of long-term robustness even in the light of how quickly its graphics aged in a world where texture-mapping was quick to become standard. It also arguably helped to pave the way for the sort of community-friendly file-sharing that the internet has since helped to flourish. "At the time, at least, there were no plans for fostering communities," Kevin explains, laughing at the accidental plateau a simple gift to players has elevated his game upon. "The track editor itself was actually just the tool I had used to design the default tracks that came with the game. We just included it in the game to allow users to make their own tracks, which was straightforward enough and would help set us apart from the arcades. It is certainly true that tracks could be shared between players, and it was specifically designed to allow that. Still, while I expected people to share the tracks, I never expected them to still be around."

Kevin is somewhat ignorant of his Lego kit's ongoing influence – "I have never heard of *TrackMania*. I don't know anything about it." – although the prolonged life expectancy it loaned the game came as less of a surprise, as Kevin explains with a matter-of-fact monotone ringing in his voice: "The

THE INSPIRATION

Kevin makes no attempt to hide the influence that *Hard Drivin'* held over *Stunts*. Atari's arcade racer was reportedly the first to use 3D polygonal environments, so the graphical similarities are of little surprise, even if they really are very similar. It's of equally small surprise that *Stunts* relied so heavily on its track editor, as alongside greater processing power, DSI would also have to match up to a cushy sit-down cab, complete with ignition keys to get things started in a way that a keyboard will never be able to compete with, no matter how many puns you come up with. Fortunately, your standard computer mouse is far and away the superior interface for course creation, which is really what set *Stunts* apart and helped give it an unnaturally long life span. Hop online and you should still be able to locate fan-made courses.



» The replay option featured several cameras, with the helicopter view the most showy. It was very cinematic for the time.



» Although the graphics dated very quickly, *Stunts*' track editor gave it plenty of long-term replayability.



THE MAKING OF… STUNTS (4D SPORTS DRIVING)



» *Stunts* was originally released on the PC, and went on to be ported to the Amiga, FM Towns and NEC PC-9801, although it could have also got a release on the Mega Drive had the development team been able to increase the frame rate.



» You could use the track editor to create some pretty exciting and dangerous tracks, incorporating things such as loop the loops, bridges, corkscrews and ramps, all of which added to the enjoyment.

GENESIS OF VISION

If there's one thing we hadn't expected to discover, it was that *Stunts* very nearly found its way onto Sega's Mega Drive, almost unintentionally. "A year or so later I was working on a library for the Sega Genesis that we used in a whole bunch of games. During development of the library I converted *Stunts* to work using that library on the Genesis. It was fully functional but we could not get the frame rate up past about 25 frames per second. There were no official plans to publish it, but I'm confident that if we could have made it faster and smoother then it might have actually been published." This is pretty interesting, and at the same time disappointing, as the game would nonetheless have been perfectly playable in this state (by point of comparison, Yu Suzuki has noted that the Mega Drive version of *Virtua Racing* only ran at about 12 to 15fps). Of course, most TVs these days do have VGA inputs…

track editor was intended to make *Stunts* more entertaining. It would have got boring pretty quickly had it been restricted to a few select tracks."

Life span was spurred even further by a replay feature that packed a buffer of a whopping ten minutes, although apparently that's not really a big deal. "The replay code just saved the key and/or joystick input and compressed it, so it didn't really need that much space. It just played back the simulation using that saved input." Kevin's voice is now so monotone that one would have mistaken the comment for a yawn had he raised his hand to cover his mouth, but he's not without something to say about the conceptual merits of the feature. "Players could jump in and continue a race that they had either crashed during, or simply wished to refine. I think I added a flag that would not allow you to save a high score if you used the continue feature." Impressively, this little piece of ingenuity has actually transpired as another example of DSI deciding it couldn't do any harm to allow players to tinker with their tools: "The actual concept of continuing from any place was probably put in so we could calculate the best time for given tracks by cheating," Kevin smiles, "and we just left it in."

Although perfect for both cheating and practice alike, the replay feature was always presented as a cosmetic indulgence first and foremost – the adjustable camera angles were a true luxury that underscored the cars and courses being true 3D creations with multiple exclamation points – and it served that feature very well. This was in part because there would always be races, if not specific moments during races, which were worth watching again and saving to your hard drive. Key example? Crash from a jump on just the right angle and your car would fly an absurd distance into the sky, the blue of the sky filling your screen for a connected chain of moments before gravity finally decides to do its job, sending you screaming to the ground in a blaze of fantastically pixelated fire. Not that such things were wholly intentional. "They were all glitches in the physics engine," Kevin admits, before moving on to discuss the compromises that have to be made with any sense of simulation when it comes to providing thrilling stunt tracks. "We did purposely make the physics unrealistic in terms of landing from jumps and so on as the forces would easily crash a real car and we weren't going for total realism, rather something that was mostly real, but that never sacrificed enjoyment."

Such glitches ended up being oddly beneficial, particularly the odd yet life-saving ability to apply the brakes midair so as to make sure the landing from that last improbable jump wouldn't result in a sudden cracked windshield animation. DSI, we're told, was fully aware of most kinks before the game hit retail – it just elected to ignore them and stick to schedule. "Most were known glitches that we would have fixed if we could have tracked them down, but we never had the time to fix all the bugs. Frankly, since they were not serious 'crash' bugs, they were lower priority to fix." Fair cop, we say – we can't think of many other bugs that have actually benefited a game to the point that they rub shoulders with *Street Fighter II*'s accidental invention of combos.

How these bugs went down with the car fanatics in the office was perhaps the truest testament to the entertainment factor. Speaking of the project head, Don

» Sometimes gas stations would zip past, although they were of little use for anything other than crashing into.



» Track selection came with the luxury of a bird's eye perspective of the entire course.





» A variety of cars and colours were available to choose from. You could even paint a Jaguar in that hideous shade of green that Nintendo has opted for as a new DS colour.



» It may look a little rough around the edges nowadays, but there's no denying that *STUNTS* remains incredible fun to actually play. The track editor alone ensures that you're never going to get bored with the sheer amount of courses you can create.

Mattrick, who has since risen to frightful heights within Microsoft, Kevin notes that he was "totally into cars", before going on to confess that "most of us have taken our street cars to the track for performance driving school and hot lapping", although apparently nobody was confident enough in their game's representation of the sport to give stunt driving a go for real. Understandable, really – they'd had plenty of experience in devising just how suicidal such a hobby could prove to be, even with generously unrealistic landing physics. And when asked if Don was ever disappointed at the glitches and compromised simulation in his game? "I doubt it – most of the glitches made the game more enjoyable!"

Fortunately, your main adversary in *Stunts* was actually time. Given the 'one careless turn and it's over' mentality of the gameplay, this was probably for the best, as opponent AI would likely be perfectly capable of ending things for the player as well as themselves on a crowded track. In fact, speaking of the standalone opponent aspect of the game (where players challenge one rival at a time), Kevin is quick to confess that it was work enough just getting the AI to stick to the road in a real 3D world, grinning as he adds that "you could probably design a track to confuse the opponents if you wanted to always win." Oh, and they would still crash into you from time to time, typically resulting in a race-end screen where you would be blamed for the whole thing.

"OPPONENTS RANGED IN SKILL, AND WERE ALL PRESENTED WITH EXAGGERATED CHARACTERISTICS AND EQUALLY HYPERBOLIC PORTRAIT PHOTOGRAPHS"

The opponents themselves ranged in skill, and were all presented with exaggerated characteristics and equally hyperbolic portrait photographs. The primary badass of the track, Skid Vicious, was particularly memorable for his fantastically over-the-top cockiness. Little did we know who he actually was: "Skid Vicious is Chris Taylor, a fellow programmer, who is now best known for *Total Annihilation*," reveals Kevin. Such a portrait is perhaps befitting of such an outspoken real-life character, although physical similarities are now thin on the ground, and it's hard to tell if the role is now considered a skeleton for the closet, or an honour for the mantelpiece.

A frightfully swift 18 years have now passed since *Stunts* first made its presence felt, and although a good number of the Tripod and Geocities fansites that dedicated themselves to the game in the late-Nineties are now defunct, the legend still burns on as low-polygon tyres churn across computer-rendered loops and corkscrews; a fantasy passion that, for some at least, expanded and bellowed out into real life. "At the time I was not really into cars, but by the time we had finished *Stunts* and *Test Drive*, I was a car fan, too," admits Kevin.

If Kevin's closing words seem lightweight, that's because they are. A quick Google search on his name, however, will bring up a homepage that is groaning under the weight of a series of shiny photos that express more on the matter than any construction of words ever could.

DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

WHERE IN THE WORLD IS CARMEN SANDIEGO?
SYSTEMS: DOS, AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, APPLE II, COMMODORE 64, MACINTOSH, MASTER SYSTEM, MEGA DRIVE, SNES
YEAR: 1985

TEST DRIVE
SYSTEMS: DOS, AMIGA, APPLE II, ATARI ST, COMMODORE 64
YEAR: 1987

TEST DRIVE 2: THE DUEL
SYSTEMS: DOS, AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, APPLE II, ATARI ST, COMMODORE 64, MEGA DRIVE, MACINTOSH, MSX, SNES, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1989

» This would be the outcome if one of your stunts went wrong or you failed to apply your midair brakes.



» Landing often meant making sudden decisions. Good thing you could start slowing down before hitting the ground.



JAMMIN'

RASTA INTERRUPT



- » **PUBLISHER:** TASKSET
- » **RELEASED:** 1983
- » **GENRE:** MUSICAL MAZE PUZZLER
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** COMMODORE 64
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £5



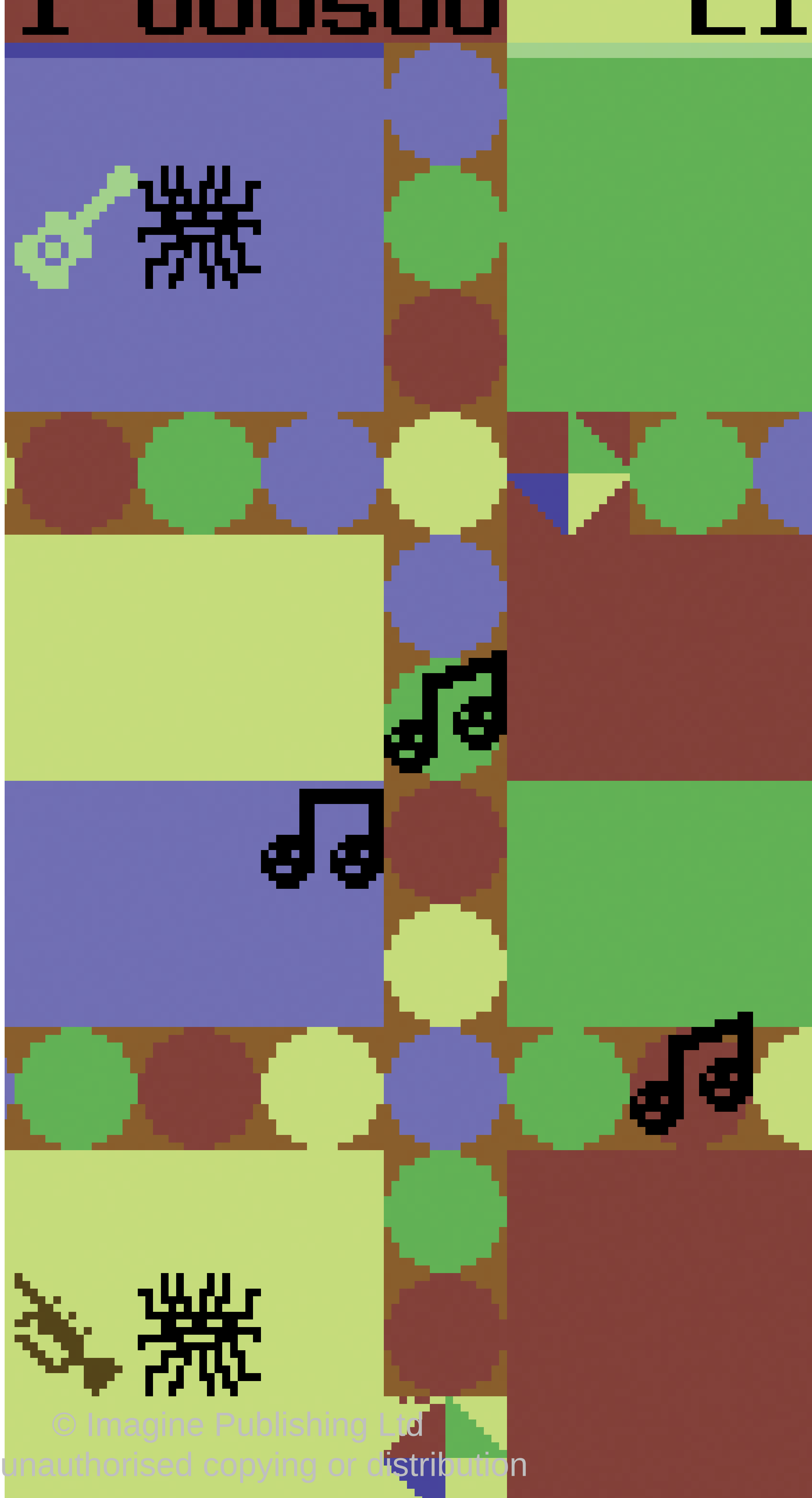
HISTORY

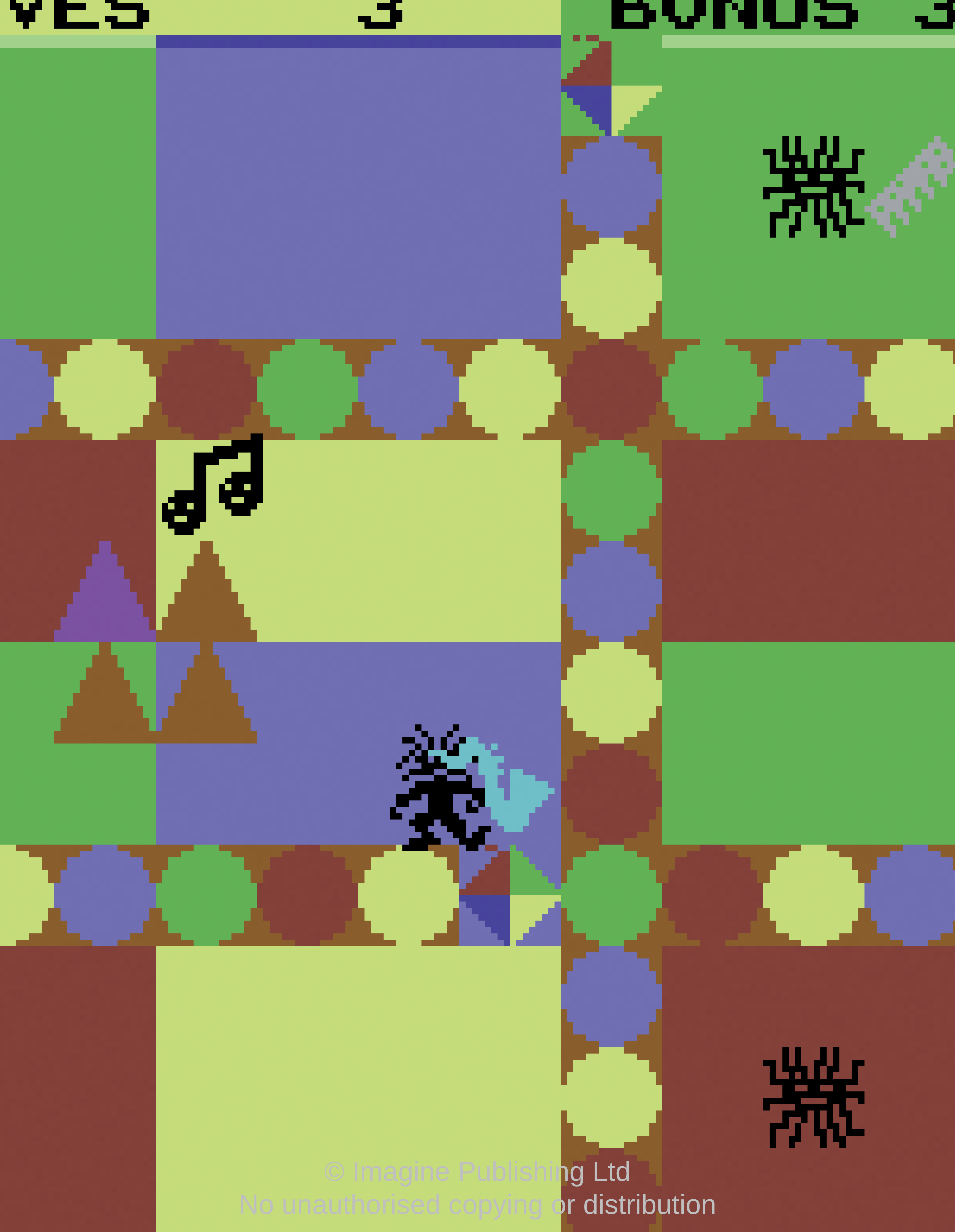
Just look at that screen. You can almost smell the herbs. Those famous Rastafarian hues of red, gold, green and erm, blue creating a technicoloured patchwork, like a quilt stitched by a ganja-toking granny.

But you really need to see *Jammin'* moving to experience the full headache. Those strings of circles are conveyor belts that carry your high-fiving hero Rankin' Rodney around the screen and later levels can become a seizure-inducing mass of blinking, interlaced colour. Even with his distinctive wobbling dreadlocks, it's easy to lose Rodney in the blur. Yet concentration is crucial. You can only move to another space of the same colour (the multicoloured diamonds conveniently allow you to hop off anywhere), and therefore you must carefully plan your route around the jigsaw, as you attempt to return the four instruments to the centre of the screen.

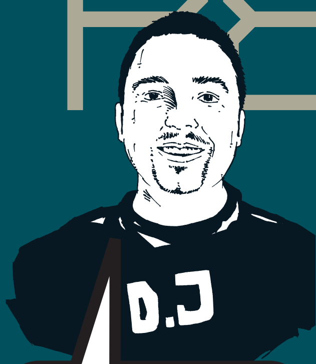
And of course, you really need to hear *Jammin'* playing. The music is cleverly constructed, with drums continuously throbbing in the background, which are joined by a bass line when you jump onto the belts. Pick up the guitar, sax, keyboard or trumpet and a glorious melody kicks in, giving you the full sound and turning you into a head-nodding hero. This building up of the music in layers makes me think of an embryonic *Rez* and the way the tune goes wonderfully off-key when the rubber-legged thief nicks your instrument has echoes of *PaRappa The Rapper*, another game with a unique rhythm to its action.

Those Taskset boys were certainly forward thinking and this is typical of their leftfield approach to game design (**Retro Gamer** has a 'Making Of' on their most famous creation in the pipeline). Special credit to Taskset's coder Tony 'Gibbo' Gibson, the mind behind *Jammin'* and its sequel, as well as other inspired oddities such as the alcohol-fuelled *Bozo's Night Out*, *Seaside Special* with its political seaweed flinging and the street-smart *Ghetto Blaster*. If you're reading this Tony, please get in touch. We'll bring the tunes, you bring the tales…



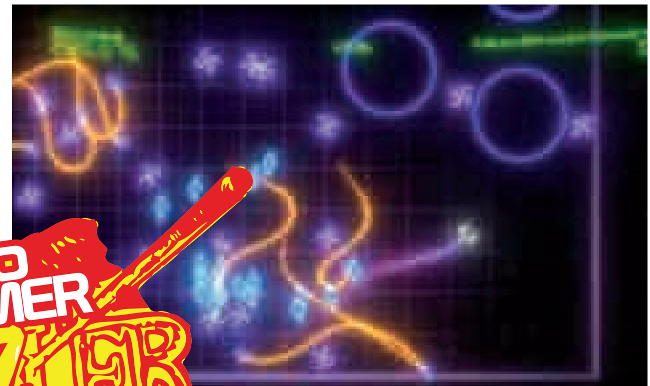


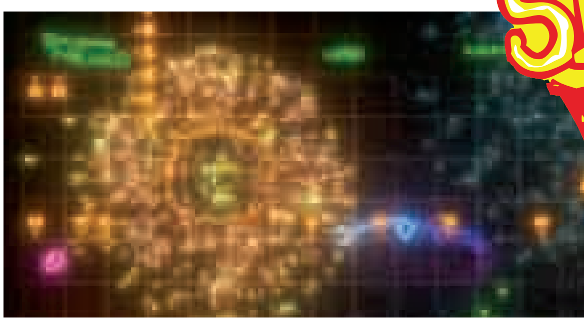
RETRORATED



After receiving many, many pleas for more downloadable reviews, we've slightly updated the section for you. This way you'll be able to keep up to date with what to waste (or not waste) your hard-earned points and cash on. Who says that we never ever listen to reader feedback, eh?









GEOMETRY WARS: RETRO EVOLVED 2

INFORMATION

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **COST:** 800 POINTS

Bizarre Creations has done it again. Not content with reinventing *Robotron: 2084* for a brand new audience, with the excellent *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved* it's now gone back to the drawing board and completely rejigged its classic game in this truly excellent sequel.

Clocking it at around the £6 mark, it's difficult to imagine how this sequel could be



better value for money than it already is, as Bizarre has included an insane amount of extras this time around. Unlike the original *Retro Evolved*, there are now a total of six different gameplay modes to enjoy, with only Deadline being available from the start (the remaining five are unlocked after a specific amount of play time has passed).

'Deadline' is a three-minute race against the clock, in which you have to score as many points as possible. 'King' is next and it's easily our favourite addition. A series of circles are placed around the game grid and not only grant you immunity from enemies but also allow you to fire at them. The kicker here is that they only accommodate you for a few seconds before turfing you out. As you're weaponless when outside a zone it's a frantic dash to get to the next bolthole. Next up is 'Evolved', which is almost identical to the original, but now with the rocket formations from waves and its Geoms.

'Pacifism' is another firm favourite and simply requires you to stay alive for as long as possible. While you can't fire, you can destroy nearby enemies by flying through conveniently placed gates. The final two modes are 'Waves', which appeared in *Project Gotham Racing 4* and 'Sequence', which comprises 20 30-second challenges.

As good as these modes are – and 'King' really is brilliant – it's the new multiplayer modes that Bizarre have included that really up the ante. While it's rather frustrating that you can't play any of the games online (a potential paid-for update maybe?) the actual options available are very good and allow you to play both co-operatively and competitively. Online scoreboards are integrated into the game's structure as well, so you can always see how close you are to beating your nearest friend's score.

As well as upping the gameplay elements to an all-new high, Bizarre has also upped the aesthetic value of *Evolved 2*, now turning it into a gaudy delight for your retinas that threatens to overload your senses with its slick beauty. Incredibly detailed and filled with all manner of pretty effects, *Retro Evolved 2*'s eye-popping visuals are complemented by a throbbing soundtrack that perfectly matches the on-screen mayhem.

Yes, the lack of online play is a missed opportunity, but it's hard to imagine how Bizarre can take these core mechanics and improve on them for a sequel.

We can't wait to see it try though.

98%









1942: JOINT STRIKE

INFORMATION

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE/ PLAYSTATION NETWORK

» **COST:** 800 POINTS

Capcom's World War II shoot-'em-up series has had a fairly rocky past over the last 24 years (read Stuart Campbell's definitive guide in Retro Gamer issue 48 for a full rundown on the franchise), so it's somewhat pleasing to see Backbone Entertainment getting so many things right with the latest game in the long-running series.

Selectively hand-picking various elements from previous games in the franchise – a dash of *1944: The Loop Master* here, a pinch of *19XX* there – *1942: Joint Strike*'s best addition is the titular 'Joint Strike' attack that greatly enhances its already competent multiplayer mode.

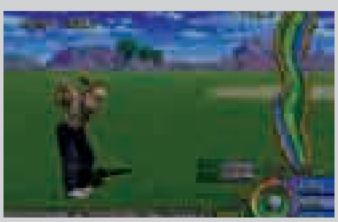
Three different weapons are available, but the actual execution is always the same; by working with your partner it's possible to quickly destroy anything that gets caught between the two planes. It's very effective, and unlike many Live Arcade games, it rarely suffers from lag when played online.

Aesthetically, *Joint Strike* is also rather pleasing, with a nice riff on the original theme tune and polished-looking visuals that often zoom in at key points during the game to give you a greater feel of participating in a huge war. While they're a little muddy in places and lack the cartoon vibrancy of earlier games in the franchise, the 'scratched' filmic look that accompanies the introduction of a boss is a really nice touch.

Speaking of boss encounters, you'll be pleased to hear that they're every bit as tense as those from the latter half of the series, and while they lack the bullet-spewing intenseness of more recent shmups, they still put up a satisfying fight.

There are issues – the initial sedateness will put some off, while the scoring system is nowhere near as complex as we'd like – but *Joint Strike*'s excellent multiplayer and sheer sense of fun more than make up for it. After its disappointing take on *Commando*, we're pleased that Backbone Entertainment has managed to score such a direct hit for Capcom's other hallowed franchise.

79%



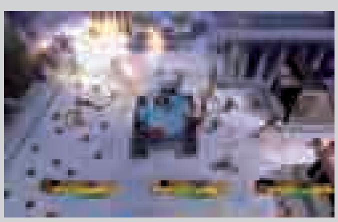
NEO TURF MASTERS

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE

» **COST:** 900 POINTS

We've always had a soft spot for this fantastic arcade game, and while it plays a relatively straightforward round of golf it still remains brilliant fun to play. The slick, digitised graphics still look fantastic, the courses are cleverly constructed, while the actual golf mechanics are spot on (it still features one of the best putting systems we've ever used). Granted, there's not a lot of depth on offer and the physics sometimes waver, but these are small niggles for what is essentially the best golf game on the Neo-Geo.

87%



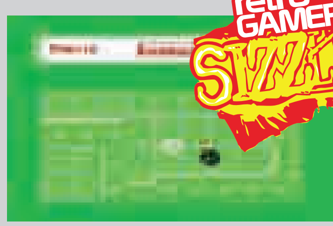
COMMANDO 3

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE

» **COST:** 800 POINTS

Using the same *Robotron*-themed controls that crop up on so many Live Arcade games, Backbone's second Capcom sequel doesn't quite capture the magic of *Commando* or *Mercs*. While many will have a problem with the cartoony visuals, it's the pedestrian gameplay that we have the biggest problem with. The original *Commando* was an insane romp behind enemy lines, while *Mercs* upped the excitement and added an excellent multiplayer feature. *Commando 3* sadly does neither. Very disappointing.

54%



retro GAMER SIZZLER

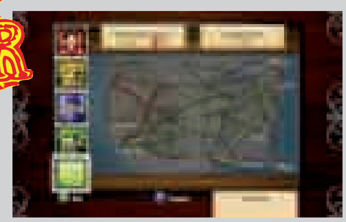
PARADROID

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE

» **COST:** 500 POINTS

Amazingly, it's only since we've recently started replaying Andrew Braybrook's excellent *Paradroid* that we've finally twigged on that your robot is made up of the digits 001. Shocking revelations aside, we're pleased to reveal that *Paradroid* has stood the test of time beautifully and is as essential to own today as it was back in 1985. The clever blend of exploring, shooting and puzzling is perfectly balanced and has still never been bettered, while its minimalist graphical style still remains achingly beautiful.

91%



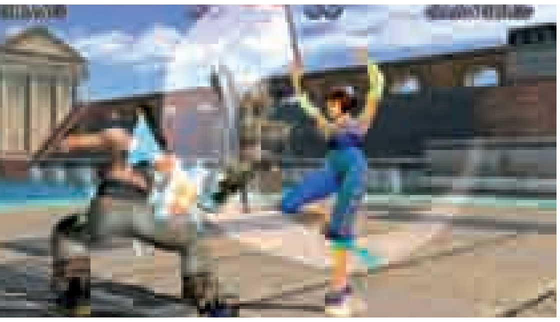
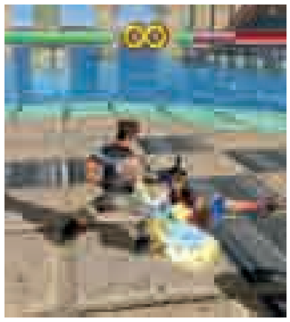
TICKET TO RIDE

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE

» **COST:** 800 POINTS

Laying train tracks across the good ol' United States of America may not sound like a whole lotta fun, but that's probably because you've never experienced the fantastic board game this Xbox Live Arcade release is based upon. As you're only allowed to choose one of three options per turn – lay trains, draw new train cards or choose a destination – *Ticket To Ride* soon becomes a clever combination of resource management and strategy, as you try to outfox your opponents. Now where is Monopoly?

83%

SOUL CALIBUR

INFORMATION

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **COST:** 800 POINTS

We've been excited about *Soul Calibur*'s impending release for ages, and while it's not quite as perfect as we were hoping for, it still remains an essential download that beat-'em-up fans just shouldn't be without.

The good news is that this is most definitely the Dreamcast version, and it still looks as beautiful as it ever did. The bad news is that the brilliant Edge Master mode has sadly fallen by the wayside, which is a real pity, as it was the one thing that we were most looking forward to. Then, of course, there's the fact that this is the only arcade game on the Xbox Live Arcade service to not feature a multiplayer mode, which we can only assume is a cynical attempt to make people buy the recently released *Soul Calibur IV* for all their online needs.

These are minor niggles, however, and the sublime gameplay, stunning aesthetics and cheap price point makes the superb *Soul Calibur* almost impossible to pass up on.

87%

INTERNATIONAL KARATE+

INFORMATION

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **COST:** 500 POINTS

It's amazing to think that no one thought of introducing a third fighter to the one-on-one beat-'em-up party before Archer MacLean came up with the idea and rocked the world of many a C64 owner. Archer hit the nail well and truly upon the head though and despite numerous remakes and rip-offs over the past 21 years, nothing has ever come close to his original idea.

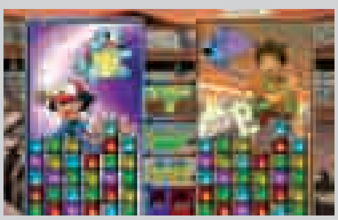
Essentially building on the gameplay mechanics of the 1986 original, the inclusion of that third fighter meant that the core gameplay elements of the genre immediately changed, with players now needing to use their brains as well as their brawn in order to win each bout and climb their way to black-belt success.

Add in the game's beautifully animated background, the superb bouncing ball mini-game and Rob Hubbard's terrific soundtrack, and *IK+* remains as fresh and exciting as the day it was first conceived.

90%




retro GAMER SIZZLER

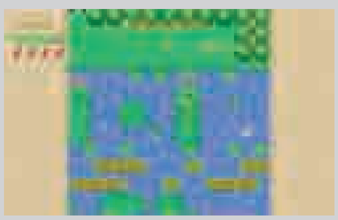


POKÉMON PUZZLE LEAGUE

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **COST:** 1,000 POINTS

Okay, so you could argue that this is just a *Pokémon* themed take on *Panel De Pon* (and you'd be right), but that doesn't mean *Puzzle League* should be ignored. This is easily one of the best puzzle games currently available on the VC, mainly due to the sheer amount that's been crammed into it. There's a wealth of great gameplay modes, ranging from simple two-player versus battles to a simple two-minute score attack mode. Well worth the somewhat hefty asking price.

86%

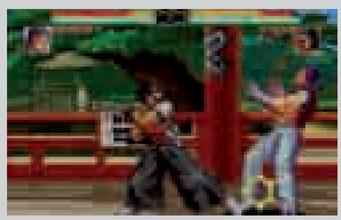


FROGGER 2

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE
» **COST:** 800 POINTS

The ratio of good to bad *Frogger* games that have been created over the years falls firmly in the latter category, and this latest effort is no different. While it does have reasonably functional graphics, the actual gameplay is woefully disappointing and is filled with insane difficulty spikes, hit-and-miss collision detection and bland level design. The original *Frogger* is already available on Xbox Live Arcade for a fraction of the price, so why you'd want this lame effort is beyond us.

33%

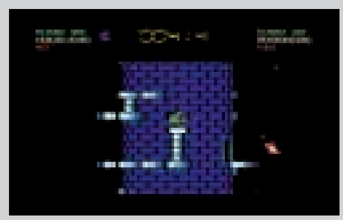


ART OF FIGHTING

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **COST:** 900 POINTS

SNK's Art Of *Fighting* really does have some fantastic-looking visuals. Sadly, that's about the only praise we can heap upon it, as it's simply too hard for its own good. *Art Of Fighting* is also incredibly sluggish and just doesn't feel as polished as the likes of *Street Fighter II* or the early *The King Of Fighters* games. A limited roster of characters – only two characters are available to you in the single-player mode – mean that this fighter has been KO'd before the first round has even started. Disappointing.

43%



NEBULUS

» **DOWNLOAD IT FROM:** VIRTUAL CONSOLE
» **COST:** 500 POINTS

Hewson's Nebulus is a classic example of style over substance. Despite featuring an amazingly clever trick – the rotating tower – when it first appeared back in 1985, it's incredibly difficult to fall in love with, and get enjoyment out of, such a frustratingly tough game. Yes, it may look brilliant, and there's some wonderful music on offer too, but much of *Nebulus* feels like it's down to chance as opposed to any actual skill on the part of the player. It's a shame really, but *Nebulus* just hasn't aged well at all.

62%

REVIEW

PORTABLE MEGA DRIVE

FINALLY WE CAN ALL PLAY ALTERED BEAST ON A BUS



INFORMATION

- **SYSTEM:** PORTABLE MEGA DRIVE
- **PRICE:** £29.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** AT GAMES/ BLAZE
- **PLAYERS:** 1



» *Ecco The Dolphin*, the fishiest-looking game on the on the Mega Drive.





» The Mega Drive port of *Shadow Dancer* is actually *way* better than the arcade original.

With both the DS and PSP boasting a thriving emulation scene, it would be fair to say that a portable handheld with 20 pre-loaded Mega Drive games will need to offer something that little bit special to really stand out and convince some to part with their readies. Now the fact that you can't download/ exchange games from a website, for a nominal cost, immediately gives a kind of 'throwaway' feel to the machine, but that's kind of the appeal. Here's a piece of portable retro kit that you could pack in a bag and take to the gym, or work, and wouldn't be totally bothered if it was sat on by an obese person or confiscated by a line manager.

The games that come pre-loaded on the machine are a nice enough collection. And predictably they have that annoying mix of brilliant and not so brilliant. Here, you're getting *Shinobi III*, *Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine*, *Sonic & Knuckles*, *Shadow Dancer* and *Decap Attack* falling into the first camp, and *Altered Beast*, *Alex Kidd In The Enchanted Castle* and *Columns III* waving flags in the latter.

Ergonomically, the unit feels light in your hand but the D-pad feels smudgy and woolly. Also, because of the lacklustre job AT Games have done with the emulation, most of the games have a garish look to them, even when viewed on a television using the handy AV leads that come packed in the box. The reason for the gaudy visuals seems to be down to the odd smoothed-over look of the emulation, which we're finding is a common problem plaguing many emulated Xbox Live Arcade releases of late. While the pixels are given this soft fuzzy treatment to make them look nicer in hi-def, ironically it seems to strip away the sharpness and clarity of the sprites, and for games played on a small screen, it isn't ideal.

Had it felt like a little more care had been taken with the design and emulation we would be duly singing AT Games' praises and endorsing that asking price. However, £30 for what is essentially a novelty handheld just seems a little pricey in our book. If you've got a spare £30 burning a hole in your pocket, and are turned on by at least half of the games on this pack then we wholly recommend the purchase, otherwise, put the money towards a Game Boy.







OPINION

It's great to see an official Mega Drive release after all these years, but I can't help but think that Blaze has missed the boat by not making this more like the original Nomad. Surely it would be relatively easy in this day and age to make a miniature version of Sega's failed handheld? Or perhaps this could have linked to the internet so that new games could be downloaded? It's certainly worth picking up if you're a fan of the machine, but the fact that the available games aren't brilliantly emulated is bound to upset most hardcore fans of the machine. For casual fans only I'd say.
Darran Jones

THE SCORES

Presentation 57%
Not great to be fair, we blame the emulation.

Aesthetics 56%
Doesn't feel robust enough.

Playability 79%
A nice array of games with plenty of variety.

Longevity 84%
If you work your way through the games there's an age of gaming here.

Value for Money 64%
We reckon it's a little pricey for what it is.

Overall 75%

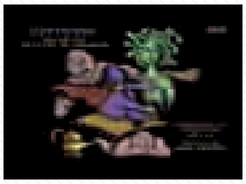
HOMEBREW RATED

FROM THE CAPITAL OF IRAQ TO HOTEL CHORES – OUR INTREPID REVIEWER GOES EVERYWHERE FOR GAMES!

SCEPTRE OF BAGHDAD

retro GAMER SIZZLER

I'M A MYSTIC… HERE'S ME STICK!



FORMAT: COMMODORE 64
DEVELOPED BY: JON WELLS AND PSYTRONIK
LINK: WWW.BINARYZONE.ORG/PSYTRONIK.PHP
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE (EMULATOR IMAGE) OR £3.99 (CASSETTE)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

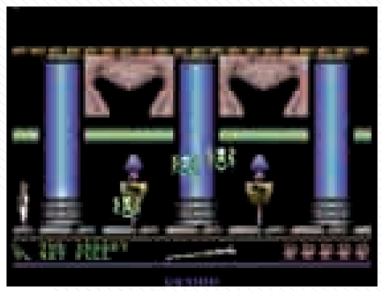
The Caliph of Baghdad's day is going very badly. A sorcerer from a neighbouring land has decided to muscle in on his territory and take over. The timing is terrible too since today the Caliph must present the Sceptre of Baghdad to his people and not only is it missing, a spot of enchantment means that the Caliph has been literally reduced in stature – in fact, he's about four feet tall!

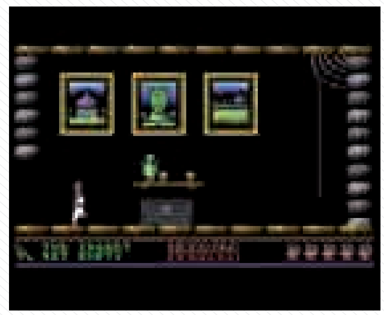
Despite his diminutive size, the Caliph must brave the now demon-infested palace, defeat the sorcerer, find the missing sceptre and save his people from potential oppression; in order to do this he will have to use the objects scattered around his home and the neighbouring landscape.

Based on the Spectrum original and developed by Jon Wells for budget publisher Atlantis before it unexpectedly closed its doors, *Sceptre Of Baghdad* puts the C64 hardware to very good use. Although the player animation is simplified, the varied, colourful backgrounds and well-animated demons certainly look the part and Paul Hannay's in-game music runs for close to ten minutes and is similarly detailed. And, while the path through the game is convoluted and the uses for some of the objects aren't immediately obvious, nothing is impossible to fathom out and working through puzzles such as what the feather duster does or how to pass Medusa will keep many adventurers happy for a while.

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 87% Intro, separate end sequence and lots of options.
AESTHETICS: 91% Very attractive graphically and a great soundtrack.
PLAYABILITY: 92% Lots of things to see, do and think about.
LONGEVITY: 86% A long-term challenge.
VALUE FOR MONEY: 92% Five quid for this many hours of play can't be sneezed at.
OVERALL: 91%

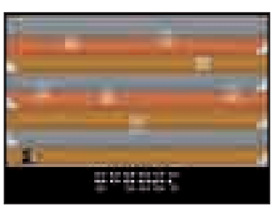




» *Sceptre Of Baghdad* will keep you engrossed for hours.

ELEVATORS AMISS

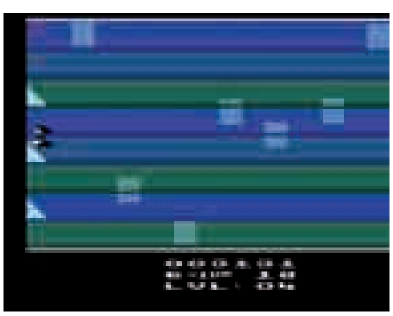
WE WERE MAID TO DO IT!



FORMAT: ATARI 2600
DEVELOPED BY: BOB MONTGOMERY
LINK: WWW.ATARIAGE.COM
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE (EMULATOR IMAGE) OR $20.00 (CARTRIDGE)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

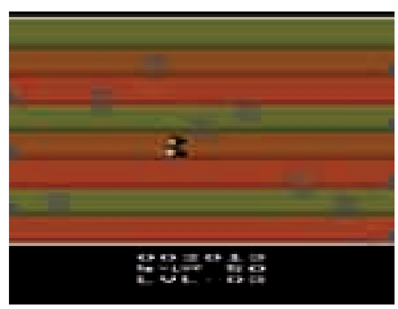
Not all videogame jobs are glamorous; in *Elevators Amiss* the player steps into the sensible shoes of a chambermaid on the night shift who unexpectedly finds herself trapped in the hotel when the lifts go haywire.

The objective is to navigate our uniformed heroine across the floors and up the staircases until she reaches the top of each screen, weaving through the gaps between rogue elevators on the way. Things are made a little harder because once our maid is set in motion across a floor she won't stop moving and can only be persuaded to change direction, so navigating between hazards becomes a combination of skill, timing and occasionally a little luck, meaning that getting to the top of the hotel and to safety will take some doing.



» An enjoyable game, with simple but very cute visuals.

Elevators Amiss does quite nicely for itself visually, the maid looks very cute in her black and white uniform as she tootles across the play area and, while the screen layouts are all the same with only the movement of the elevators and the colour schemes to differentiate them, those small variations alone are enough to keep them from becoming repetitive. The control system is what makes this game stand out the most though. What could otherwise have been a fairly mundane case of moving a bit, waiting for an elevator and moving again turns into a more involved and exciting test of skill. And let's face it, everybody loves to spend a little bit of time pretending to be a maid… or is that just us?



» *Elevators Amiss* is a worthwhile buy, despite the cartridge's cost.

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 75% Four levels of play and an attract mode.
AESTHETICS: 68% The maid looks cute and the music is jolly.
PLAYABILITY: 81% Lots of fun for maids.
LONGEVITY: 73% The random nature of the levels means lots of variety.
VALUE FOR MONEY: 74% Cartridges aren't cheap, so try before you buy.
OVERALL: 78%

RETRO GAMER IS PROBABLY THE ONLY PLACE WHERE STARS AND BALLOONS CAN PEACEFULLY COEXIST

BLUE STAR

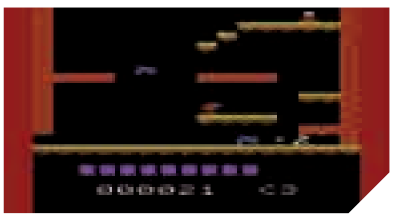
ON A MISSION TO SAVE THE GALAXY

FORMAT: UNEXPANDED VIC-20
DEVELOPED BY: STEVE 'KWEEPA' MCCREA
LINK: WWW.CRONOSOFT.CO.UK
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE (EMULATOR IMAGE) OR £2.99 (CASSETTE)
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK



Advanced computers being put in charge of everything and then losing the plot are a recurring theme for both science fiction and computer game stories. So it's hardly surprising that the Central Processing Unit, a super computer of immense power and complexity, has gone totally wibbly and wants to make life very difficult for the peace-loving people of your home planet in *Blue Star*.

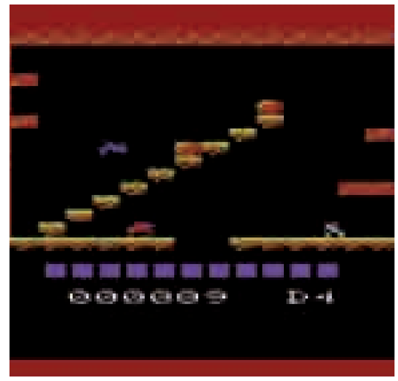
So your mission, should you accept it, is to infiltrate the fortress around the CPU, avoid various guardians patrolling the rooms and, with the aid of some useful objects that you'll find scattered about, defeat the computer before it does any more harm.



» Plenty of variation is offered with the game's numerous locations.



» You'll want to either turn the sound down or get some earplugs.



» *Blue Star* looks rather good considering the VIC's limitations.

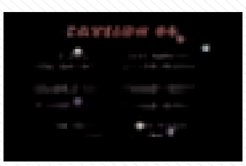
Considering the limitations of the unexpanded VIC, *Blue Star* is pretty remarkable. The graphics are chunky but attractive and, despite getting busy later on, there's no sign of slowdown in the movement. And, despite all of these visuals being crammed into a minute space and the screen layouts being reused quite often, a good effort has been made to redress them each time. Sadly, the sound suffers and after a couple of spot effects for things like when the player jumps, there's just an in-game tune that loops within five seconds, which is guaranteed to have players turning off the volume. But with over 40 locations to explore and over a dozen objects to collect, *Blue Star* is quite a challenge… just make sure the sound is down.

THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 65% Simple title screen.
AESTHETICS: 73% Really looks the part, but the music is annoying.
PLAYABILITY: 86% Simple to get into but very addictive.
LONGEVITY: 83% Lots of locations and quite a bit to be done.
VALUE FOR MONEY: 79% For a couple of quid it's worth looking into.
OVERALL: 86%

CAVELON 64

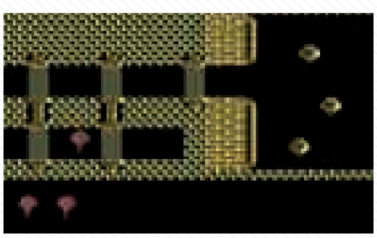
RICHARD BRANSON WOULD BE PROUD



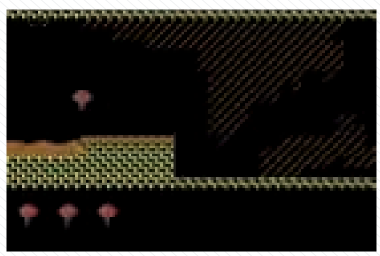
FORMAT: COMMODORE 64
DEVELOPED BY: TIMO BRUEGGMANN
LINK: HTTP://NONAME.C64.ORG/CSDB/RELEASE/?ID=68583
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

The very first thing that must be said about *Cavelon 64* before anything else is that it's hard – blisteringly, mind-bogglingly tough, in fact.

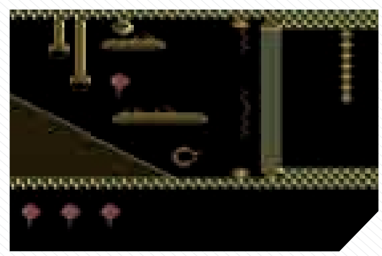
The concept of the game is simple enough – guide a brightly-coloured balloon through a series of convoluted scrolling caverns in search of the exit, manoeuvring between bolts of electricity arcing between electrodes and walls that presumably belonged to Erwin Schrödinger since they constantly blink in and out of existence. Players will need a good memory and not a little patience since there are places where the tunnel branches and selecting the route without a dead end is a matter of trial and error. Along with the regular movement controls, the fire button acts as a 'boost' and doubles the scrolling speed, giving the player a way to career into the landscape faster than they would have previously!



» Guiding your balloon to the exit will really test your patience.



» You might enjoy *Cavelon 64* if you like really frustrating games.



» Where are the other 98 red balloons then?

Cavelon 64 isn't a bad game as such, but it is badly flawed and trying to work through the first three or four screens alone is an uphill struggle since the tunnels are just too narrow and convoluted. Thankfully there are two game modes that can be selected from the title page; normal mode issues the player with just three balloons, while competition mode grants an infinite supply and the task is to navigate the tunnels, while losing as few balloons as possible in the process. This second mode does at least mean that players will see the game map in its entirety rather than just the opening screens.

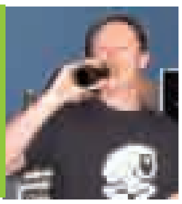
THE SCORES

PRESENTATION: 54% Two play modes selected from the title page.
AESTHETICS: 43% Average backgrounds, reasonable sprite but devoid of sound.
PLAYABILITY: 55% Fly along, smash into background, fly some more…
LONGEVITY: 42% Too frustrating for most gamers to last for very long.
VALUE FOR MONEY: N/A
OVERALL: 47%


FIREBIRD
Steve Davis
SNOOKER

HOMEBREW HEROES

Jonathan Cauldwell



IN A BRAND NEW SERIES, RETRO GAMER SPEAKS TO THE DEDICATED INDIVIDUALS AND COMPANIES THAT CONTINUE TO SUPPORT THE THRIVING HOMEBREW COMMUNITY. THIS MONTH, JONATHAN CAULDWELL…

Retro Gamer: So Jonathan, how did you get into coding on the Spectrum?
Jonathan Cauldwell: "Like everybody else, I started out messing around in BASIC, but it wasn't long before I realised that it was incapable of producing the sort of games I wanted to write. In order to progress, I had to learn more about this almost mystical language that commercial games used, called machine code. This meant reading lots of articles and experimentation with the tables of mnemonics printed in the back of the Spectrum manual, which took a lot of time."

RG: So why pick the Spectrum over some of the other 8-bit systems?
JC: "Thinking back, my choice was probably influenced by the number of games that were available, and by the number of friends who already had one. Back in the early-Eighties it was impossible to beat the machine's specifications for anything like the same price tag. If you're looking to choose a machine as a retro development platform, the Spectrum's simplicity and its limitations are its strength. It almost forces you to concentrate on more important aspects."

RG: How did your relationship with Cronosoft come about?
JC: "It happened when Simon Ullyatt posted a message on the World of Spectrum forums, stating that he wanted to set up a software house to publish Speccy games. He wondered if there might be someone out there with an old unpublished game or two, written back in the day and now gathering dust. As it happens, I had just written *Egghead In Space* and gave him a couple of other games from the mid-Nineties."

RG: Many of your games tend to combine two, distinct genres, often to great success. You obviously enjoy a challenge…
JC: "For me, it should be all about the gameplay. The design of a game and the way it plays are of the utmost importance, so that's why I try to weave unusual mechanisms together. If you think about it, a game needs to work on several levels, and the more areas of the brain that are in use, the less chance there is of the player becoming bored quickly."

RG: What do you feel is your greatest homebrew achievement and why?
JC: "In helping to start the Cronosoft ball rolling, in a way I've played a tiny part in the revival of the Spectrum games scene. Of course, most of the credit should go to the likes of Bob Smith, Weird Science Software, CEZ Games Studio and many others for their continued contributions. The Spectrum indie games scene is buzzing at the moment, and long may that continue."

RG: You've made several *Egghead* games now. Why do you think he remains so popular?
JC: "Well, he's been around a long time so many Spectrum owners remember the first couple of *Egghead* games from magazine covertapes. The later games are also similar to the *Monty Mole* series – more by accident than design – and Monty has always been extremely popular."

RG: Are there any other games you've made that you'd like to expand upon?
JC: "Yes, lots of them. When revisiting old games I'm always looking at ways in which they could be improved or expanded. It can be difficult to resist the temptation to produce sequels to everything, but you can't keep going around in circles like that. You have to move on, come up with new ideas, and do different things."

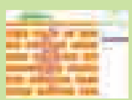
RG: Have you not considered working within the industry as a coder on newer games?
JC: "I was offered jobs in the industry in the mid-Nineties, but by that time felt that modern games were going in the wrong direction. Everything had to be in 3D whether it suited the game or not, and teams were becoming bigger so individual programmers were having less and less input into the games on which they worked. As it happens, I now write basic videogames for a living. They're not very flashy, just sprite-based fruit machines and poker games, but it's quite refreshing to be surrounded by the simplest of gaming elements all day long. It's going back to basics, if you like."

RG: Is it actually possible to create a living on these titles, or is it something you just do as a hobby?
JC: "Creating a living from Spectrum games? That's a good one! Well, it keeps me in blank discs, so it's self-financing in that respect, but it won't pay the bills. Many of my games are free in any case. The most important thing is that people are playing them and having fun."

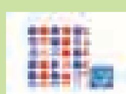
RG: Your recent release *Fusion* went down very well at this year's Retro Fusion event. Attention like that must make all the hard work worthwhile…
JC: "Events like Retro Fusion are good for bouncing ideas off others, and for getting feedback. Retro gamers are more discerning than mainstream gamers, and it's always interesting to talk about game designs with people whose main focus is on the gameplay."

RG: Finally, can you tell us about any new games you're currently working on?
JC: "I have an idea for a game with a working title of *DNA*, but haven't got much code to show for it just yet. Essentially, the player has to collect sequences of 'game DNA', which change the very nature of the game they're playing. Once they have altered the 'genes', the game re-spawns and turns into something else – a maze game, a platformer, a shoot-'em-up, or anything else. Every aspect of the game, from the control method and player's abilities to the colour and behaviour of the nasties would be controlled by this DNA, and would change throughout the course of the game. How this will work in practice is not yet entirely clear, although figuring out the logistics should certainly be an interesting experience…"

CAULDWELL ON CAULDWELL

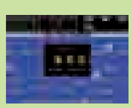


GameX
"I played a business game on the Acorn Electron, and liked the idea of trading shares. I wanted to cross that with twitch gameplay, so instead of buying and selling shares the player trades in a cross-section of games."

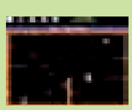


Higgledy Piggledy
"This started out as a multi-directional scrolling platformer, but then I had to come up with an idea that would make use of the engine. I was inspired by *Sheepwalk*, possibly the worst Spectrum game ever."

Shoot-'Em-Up Designer
"S.E.U.D carries on from the success of Platform Game Designer, but with the flexibility of being able to define which actions take place at various points in the game, and so change the way the game behaves."



Loco Bingo
"In *Loco Bingo*, platform game meets bingo, and the player – a locomotive – shunts numbered trucks around *Soko-Ban*-style, pushing the trucks together to form new numbers."



Egghead
"This was my first widely published game, and took four weeks to write in November 1989. With collect-'em-up gameplay, based on *Manic Miner*, most of the development time was spent on the 40 level designs."

BARGAIN HUNT

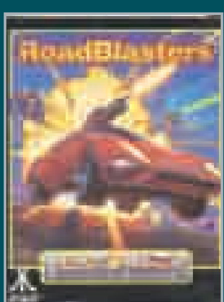
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japanese auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over a hundred different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it.

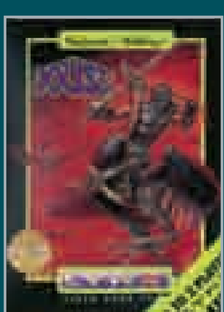
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting back on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. This month we're going to be looking at Atari Lynx games.

ROADBLASTERS
Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Racing**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£14.78**



JOUST
Publisher: **Shadowsoft**
Genre: **Arcade Action**
Normally sells for **£12**
Ended at **£17.01**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**

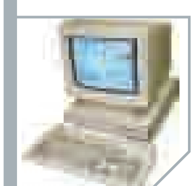


PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released.
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

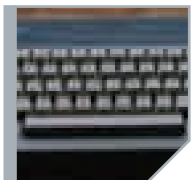
ACORN



ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) with games**
Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built-in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor.



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($165+)**
Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**
Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- GET DEXTER
- XOR
- SORCERY +



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE

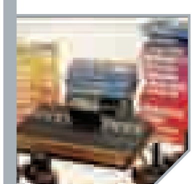


APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) with games**
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

ROCKING HORSE SHIT
HEN'S TEETH
LUCKY FIND
EBAY REGULAR
CAR-BOOT SALE BARGAIN

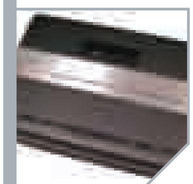


5200

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.

- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800

» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.

- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES

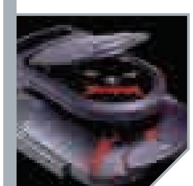


JAGUAR

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!

- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**

Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!

- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD



LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.

- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



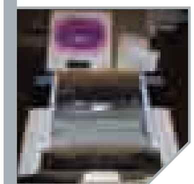
ST

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**

This is an Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models available, of various specifications.

- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) prices fluctuate wildly**

Ultra-rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**

Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.

- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



PIPPIN (ATMARK)

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**

A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. Its high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.

- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



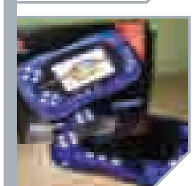
WONDERSWAN (B/W)

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL

» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.

- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA 500/600/1200

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) more with games, depending on model**

Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models with differing specs. The Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.

- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



C16/PLUS 4

» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**

The less well-known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.

- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

One of the bestselling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.

- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.

- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND



C128

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**

Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.



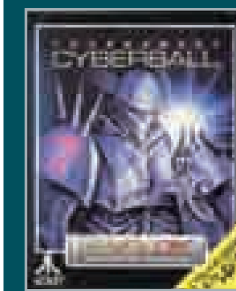
CDTV

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

TOURNAMENT CYBERBALL

Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Sports**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **No Sale**



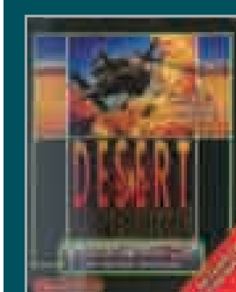
BATTLE WHEELS

Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Racing**
Normally sells for **£12**
Ended at **£6.35**



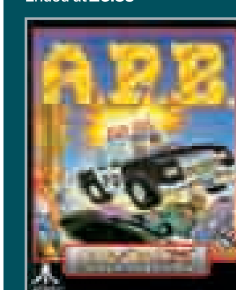
DESERT STRIKE

Publisher: **Telegames**
Genre: **Shoot-'em-up**
Normally sells for **£39.99**
Ended at **£8.48**



A.P.B.

Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Arcade Action**
Normally sells for **£12**
Ended at **£6.89**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.



CD32
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.
- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D



VIC-20
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**
The computer that established the Commodore brand.
- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU

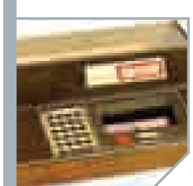


FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**
Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.



FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**
A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!
- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS



BALLY ASTROCADE
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.
- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE



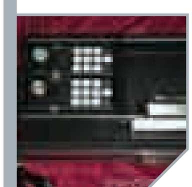
BARCODE BATTLER
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**
Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…
- BATMAN BEGINS: HD DVD
- STREET KINGS: BLU-RAY
- PLANET EARTH: HD DVD



CASIO LOOPY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
More insanity from the Land of the Rising Sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio had hoped it would do better than its PV-1000 console released in 1983.



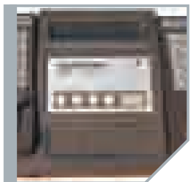
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F
» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) from the USA**
The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).



COLECOVISION
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**
Coleco's third-generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.
- CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS



DRAGON 32/64
» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) very cheap on eBay**
Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived, though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.
- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER



ARCADIA 2001
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Failed console by Emerson that had numerous different clones released, as well.
- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER



EPOCH CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.



EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, it was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.



INTELLIVISION
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**
Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.
- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE



ODYSSEY
» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act. Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.



ORIC-1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
The Oric-1 was a highly underrated 8-bit bit home computer created by Oric Products International. Despite having many games that were arguably superior to those on the Spectrum it was sadly unable to compete with the rival machine's high sales.
- XENON1
- INSECT INSANITY
- RAT SPLAT



PLAYSTATION
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**
After manufacturing MSX machines, Sony re-entered the games hardware market and this time took it over. There are countless excellent PS games. It was later re-released as the PSone, which is more expensive but looks much nicer.
- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER



SAM COUPÉ
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) allegedly for a mint system**
Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupé was a unique 8-bit British home computer that didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.
- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA



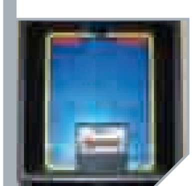
SUPERVISION
» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.



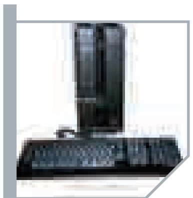
TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.
- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D



TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)
» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Series of old computers by Tomy.



VECTREX (MB/GCE)
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.
- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

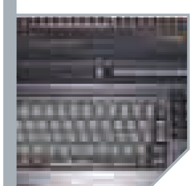
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent home-brew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER



MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

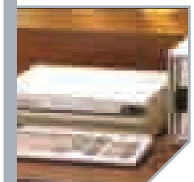
NEC



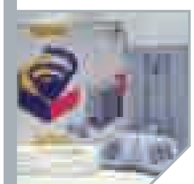
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of cool Japanese games for it. Released in the US as the NEC Trek. Be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) cheap on Yahoo! Japan**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two systems' Hu-Cards are not compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) massive fluctuations**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- PC KID
- OUTRUN



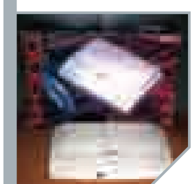
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) prices can fluctuate**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had six games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PC-E and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PC-E DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PC-E/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.

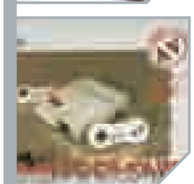


DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped-down white version of the PC-E Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a six-button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over 1,000 games to choose from!

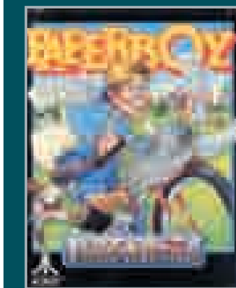


FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned, the drive belts break very easily.

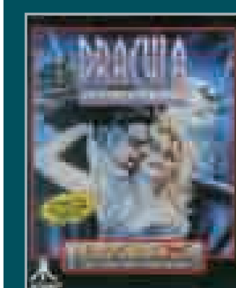
PAPERBOY
Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Arcade Action**
Normally sells for **£13**
Ended at **£7.27**



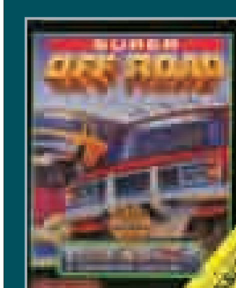
BLOCK OUT
Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Puzzler**
Normally sells for **£7**
Ended at **£2.49**

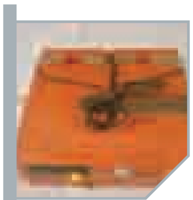


DRACULA: THE UNDEAD
Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Adventure**
Normally sells for **£12**
Ended at **£6.03**



SUPER OFF-ROAD
Publisher: **Telegames**
Genre: **Racing**
Normally sells for **£25**
Ended at **£13.69**





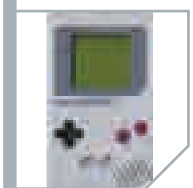
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN

» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



GAME&WATCH

» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yokoi.



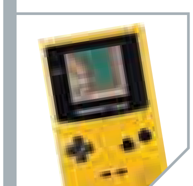
GAME BOY B/W

» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite its age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET

» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact Game Boy, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR

» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic Game Boy. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



GAME BOY ADVANCE

» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64

» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge-based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought-after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SUPER MARIO 64
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of its cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and it's very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72-pin based NES games work.
- METROID
- THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)

» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of the company's most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)

» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



CD-I 205/210/220

» YEAR **from 1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips. The 200 series consists of front-loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/500

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) more with DVC**
This is the consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000

» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000 that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



32X

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance its capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



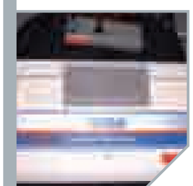
DREAMCAST

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- SHENMUE
- SKIES OF ARCADIA
- REZ



GAME GEAR

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. With add-on tuner, could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50-£150 ($80-$260)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history. The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



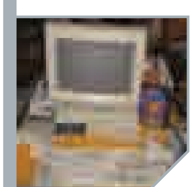
SC-3000

» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



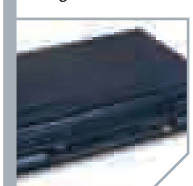
MASTER SYSTEM I/II

» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- CALIFORNIA GAMES



AMSTRAD MEGA PC

» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) according to eBay**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad

hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II

» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**

The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.



GENESIS 3

» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**

Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.

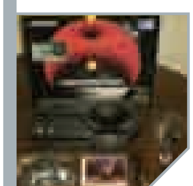


NOMAD

» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**

Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**

A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**

Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) more with games**

Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook-style boxes.

- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



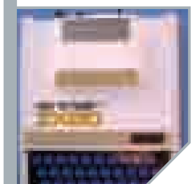
SATURN

» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse that, despite an amazing catalogue of games, never really took off.

- BURNING RANGERS
- RADIANT SILVERGUN
- PANZER DRAGOON SAGA

SINCLAIR



ZX80

» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) apparently if boxed and mint**

Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.

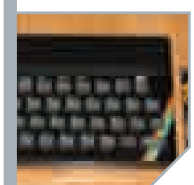


ZX81

» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**

Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
- SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K

» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K

» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM+

» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2

» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +3

» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**

The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, the Spectrum was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK



NEO-GEO AES

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**

High-powered home system by SNK. Features many high-quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEO-GEO MVS

» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) multi-slot systems cost more**

High-powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home-based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of Neo-Geo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted.)

- METAL SLUG 3
- KING OF FIGHTERS 96
- BLAZING STAR



NEO-GEO CD

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**

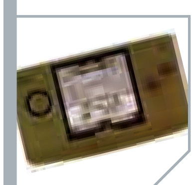


NEO-GEO CDZ

» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**

CD-based Neo-Geo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of Neo-Geo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHODOWN RPG



NEO-GEO POCKET (B/W)

» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



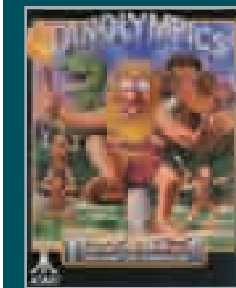
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR

» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**

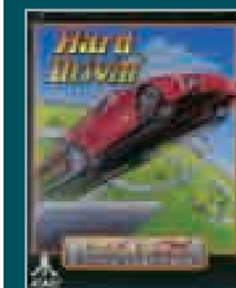
Handheld Neo-Geo systems by SNK that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system, though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS [CAPCOM/SNK]
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM [CAP VS SNK]

DINOLYMPICS
Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Puzzler**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£18.23**



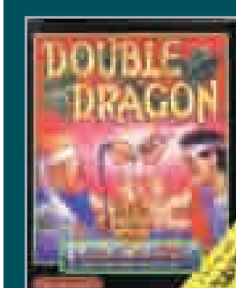
HARD DRIVIN'
Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Racing**
Normally sells for **£11**
Ended at **£15.25**



TURBO SUB
Publisher: **Atari**
Genre: **Shoot-'em-up**
Normally sells for **£8**
Ended at **£4.79**



DOUBLE DRAGON
Publisher: **Telegames**
Genre: **Beat-'em-up**
Normally sells for **£39.99**
Ended at **£23.99**



NEXT ISSUE

LOAD 56

ON SALE 09 OCTOBER 2008

The Ultimate Adventure!

In a huge exclusive, we track down and speak to the uncredited coder who created the Sir Arthur Pendragon adventures for Ultimate: Play The Game to find out what it was like working for the legendary software house

ULTIMATE

More Exciting Features

» He's one of Japan's most revered videogame directors, but what makes Hideo Kojima tick? Discover why he nearly left the industry, the difficulties of coding on early consoles and how he really feels about cult favourites like *Policenauts* and *Snatcher*.

» The Commodore 16 is probably the most requested machine we've ever been asked to cover since **Retro Gamer** relaunched. After much badgering at this year's Retro Fusion we're proud to finally present a detailed look at Commodore's much-loved computer.

» Revolution Software's *Beneath A Steel Sky* is one of the greatest point-and-click adventures to ever appear from a British developer. Find out how the cyberpunk-themed adventure was created in an exclusive new interview.

» Konami's *Castlevania* series has given us two decades of whip-cracking action. With two new games on the horizon we decided to go for a walk on the wild side and fully explore the popular gothic franchise.



RETRO DIRECTORY

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE LISTING ITS FAVOURITE WEBSITES AND INTERVIEWING SOME OF THEIR KEY MEMBERS. THIS ISSUE WE SPEAK TO VINNY MAINOLFI ABOUT HIS EXCELLENT WEBSITE THAT'S DEDICATED TO C64 ENDINGS

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

ATARI AGE
www.atariage.com
Excellent resource site dedicated to all aspects of Atari gaming.

ATARI ORG
www.atari.org
Another superb Atari site with every machine from the 2600 to arcade classics.

AUSSIE ARCADE
www.aussiearcade.com.au
A fantastic arcade forum catering for an Aussie audience.

CPC ZONE
www.cpczone.net
Excellent site for the Amstrad range of computers with all the latest news and reviews.

C64 GAME ENDINGS
www.c64endings.co.uk/
Over 260 endings for classic and not so classic C64 games.

LEMON64
www.lemon64.com
Superb Commodore 64 site filled with insightful reviews and a friendly forum.

LEMON AMIGA
www.lemonamiga.com
This great Amiga site is run by Kim Lemon, owner of Lemon 64.

MAC RETRO
www.macretro.tk
Getting emulators up and running on the Mac, this is a brilliant site.

NEO-GEO.COM
www.neo-geo.com
Dedicated to SNK's systems, but with lots of other stuff to enjoy.

WEEKEND GAMER
www.weekend-gamer.co.uk
Great site that covers a range of topics, from TV to gaming.

SYSTEM16
www.system16.com
Sega focused, but also dedicated to covering as many arcade games as possible.

NTSC-UK
http://ntsc-uk.domino.org/
This site is devoted to imports, but there's a retro section with useful advice on rare imports.

OLD-COMPUTERS.COM
http://old-computers.com
If you think the 2600 is ancient, visit this fascinating site.



When did you set up C64 Endings?
Vinny Mainolfi: Hmm… back in the early-Nineties I was producing 5.25 disks that contained game endings to different Commodore 64 games along with a menu system. Quite a few people wrote to me and commented on how great the idea was. In 1997, I started to plan out an idea for a website that will house the endings that I had already obtained, but I still needed to teach myself HTML.

It was either late-1997 or early-1998 that I placed my new website online. It was very popular and lots of fun.

Then, between the years of 2002 and 2003, I asked my good friend, Frank Gasking, if he would look after my site while I took a break to prepare for the birth of my daughter. He did an amazing job but time also caught him up and he needed to spend more time on his own great Commodore 64 website, Games That Weren't.

The game endings website disappeared for a while, until Andrew Fisher (Merman) started to stir up some interest for the site to return. I felt it was time to bring the site back and so in 2006 I spent a few days designing a new face to the site and placed it online for all to see and enjoy.

> "PEOPLE FLOCK TO THE WEBSITE TO SEE AND DOWNLOAD THE ENDINGS"

Why base it around the Commodore 64 instead of other machines?
VM: Are you kidding me? The Commodore 64 rules! All joking aside, I grew up with my Commodore 64 and spent a lot of my youth playing C64 games. I then progressed onto cracking and writing small demos, which then led to creating disks full of game endings. I have thought about creating ending sites for other formats, but that's something for the future – or when I win the lottery.

What gives it the edge over similar sites?
VM: The fact that we care about the endings and make a point of reviewing them and discussing them on a daily basis. Other sites only supply a video walkthrough or the screenshots. We supply screenshots, a real snapshot of the ending to view on an emulator and/or on a real Commodore 64, a review from the C64endings team and an overall score. Our recent addition of a forum has also added another element to the success of the site. Finally, you'll find that I add a new game ending almost every day!

What's the most popular part of the site?
VM: The endings of course. People flock to the site to see and download the endings and then they go to the forum to discuss what they have seen and heard.

How can our readers contribute?
VM: By logging on the site and viewing the endings, and then going to the forum and contributing comments. In other words: have fun with the site and forum at www.atfreeforum.com/c64endings.

What's your favourite C64 ending and why?
VM: For pure nostalgic reasons, it's got to be the ending to *Thing On A Spring* by Gremlin Graphics. It's not an outstanding ending (check it out on the website), but I remember spending ages trying to complete it and eventually feeling the rush of relief when I finally killed the evil goblin.

The best looking and sounding ending is probably Jon Wells' *Sceptre Of Baghdad*, which amazes me every time I load it up. Pure quality from start to finish.

DEEPER LOOK – WEBSITE OF THE MONTH

C64 Endings
http://c64endings.co.uk



Regular readers of the mag will know we love our game endings, so it's unsurprising to learn that we've been spending a fair amount of time recently browsing this excellent website. Vinny has put an insane amount of love and attention into his remarkable little site, with each game featuring various details and even the ability to download and watch each ending in real-time.

The site itself is incredibly easy to navigate, nicely laid out and has an excellent little forum and news section. In short this is the perfect website if you're a fan of the Commodore 64 and deserves to be bookmarked by anyone with even a passing interest in Commodore's 8-bit machine.

THE RETRO GAMER DIRECTORY

RACKET BOY
http://racketboy.com/
There's a definite Sega slant to Racket Boy, but it's a lot of fun.

RADIO SEGA
www.radiosega.net
If you're a fan of Sega music you'll love Radio Sega.

SEGA-16.COM
www.sega-16.com
Mega Drive site with some incredibly in-depth interviews.

RETRO101
www.retro101.co.uk
It's fairly new, but Retro101 has some informative articles.

RETRO GAMING RADIO
www.monroeworld.com
Superb monthly podcast that looks at the US game market.

RLLMUK FORUM
www.rllmukforum.com/index.php
All the latest games and a retro section with helpful members.

THE RUBBER BEERMAT
http://myweb.tiscali.co.uk/themanor33/TRBv2/
Excellent Spectrum site that champions a lot of rare games.

SHOOT THE CORE
www.shootthecore.moonpod.com
This excellent site loves shmups of all descriptions.

SHMUPS
www.shmups.com
Absolutely amazing website dedicated to the best gaming genre of all time.

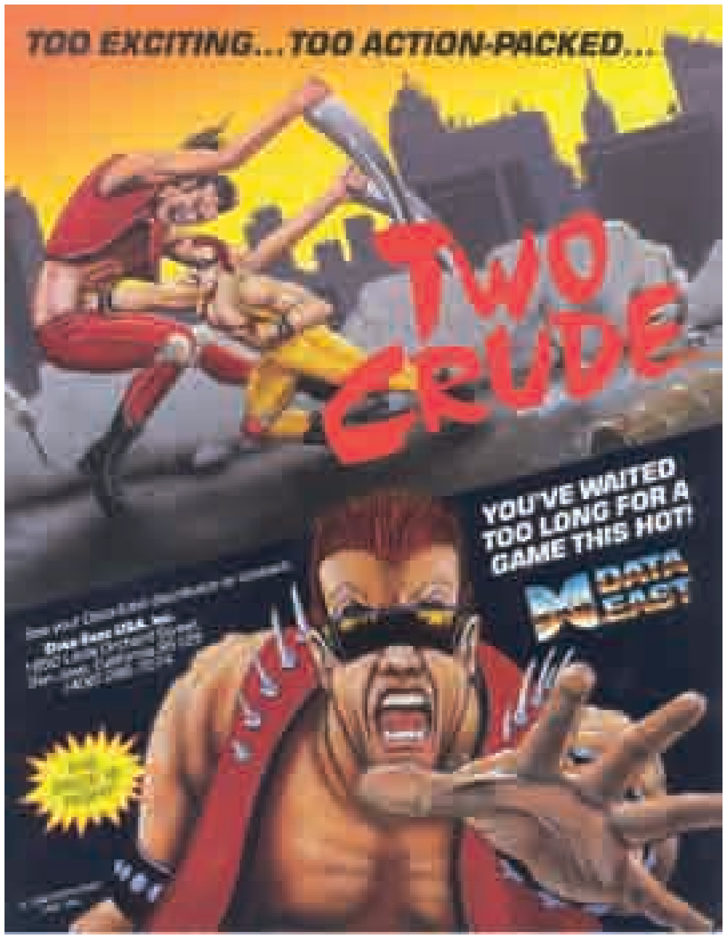
VIDEOGAME MUSEUM
www.vgmuseum.com
Screenshots, game endings, cover scans, and reviews.

THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE ARCHIVE
www.vc-reviews.com
Your one-stop shop for everything VC-related.

WORLD OF SPECTRUM
www.worldofspectrum.org
Superb Spectrum site that offers a friendly forum.

If you want to add your website to our expanding directory, please contact Darran at darran.jones@imagine-publishing.co.uk.

END/GAME

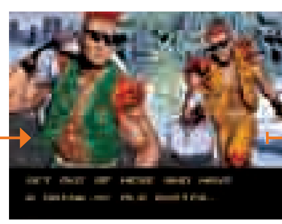


TWO CRUDE DUDES

Two Crude Dudes: two stupid jerk mercenaries with a ridiculous nickname hired by America to topple a criminal organisation called Big Valley. And here's the idiotic outcome to their tale...











SCREEN 1
So we've thwarted the evil scientist and it sounds like we've given him some kind of brain damage. Bearing in mind that he's spouting threats at us shouldn't you be sticking a bullet in his eye right about now, Mister Crude?

SCREEN 2
That's a bit more like it, chaps. It looks like they've blown the scientist's lair to smithereens – although the Crude twins probably forgot to leg it before the blast. They don't seem to be the sharpest tools in the box.

SCREEN 3
Why would a 'drink' be the first thing these guys want? They've spent the game looting coke machines and downing pop. Surely a public lavatory or a secluded piece of pavement would be priority number one.

SCREEN 4
With the base destroyed and Mr Scientist beaten, we're left to ponder this wonderfully confusing idiom. Fighting for the 'crude of justice', eh? Surely that's like 'fighting for the rubbish of freedom' or the 'basic of peace'.

SCREEN 5
Thanks for that, nondescript narration guy. We'll be sure to 'keep going on' for 'another combat', as soon as we've fully understood what the hell it is you're blathering on about. Fortunately, there wasn't 'another combat' to be had.